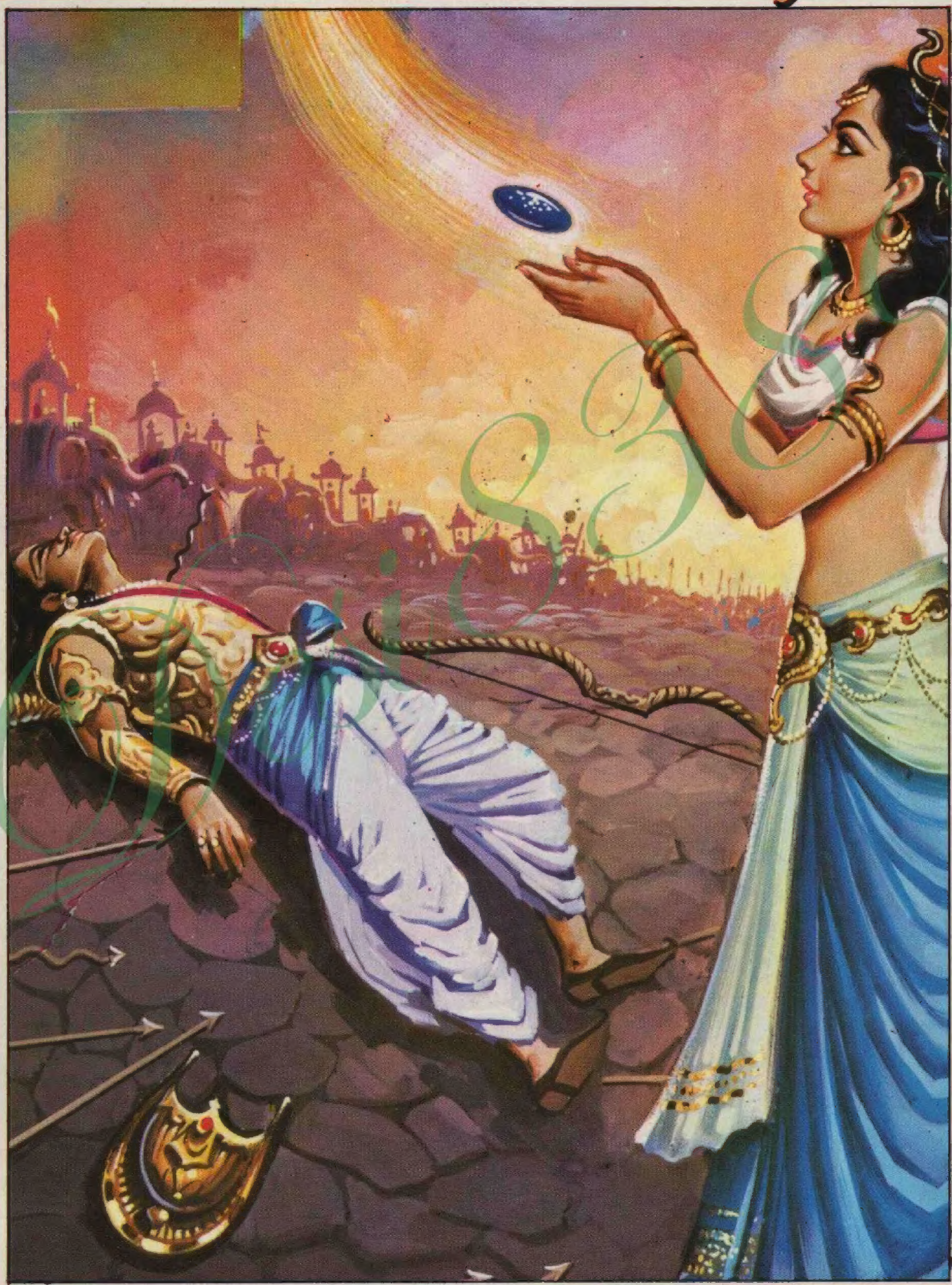
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

Uloopi

Vol. 629 Rs 25



Amar Chitra Katha: The Glorious Heritage of India

IBH

ULOOPI

Uloopi was the daughter of Kauravya, king of the Nagas. The Nagas are a historical race and there are many references to them in the Puranas and Mahabharata. According to mythology, Nagadwipa was one of the seven divisions of India. There were Naga kingdoms in Mathura, Padmavati and Eastern India. Perhaps like the Asuras, Daityas and Danavas, the Nagas, too, offered strong resistance to the spread of Aryan culture. The favourite theory is that the Nagas were so named because they worshipped serpents (Nagas) and held them in awe. Mythology describes them as having the face and torso of human beings but the lower extremities of serpents.

Of the various racial groups that inhabited India at the time of the advent of the Aryans, the Nagas seem to have been in a sufficiently advanced stage of civilization. There are accounts of many Aryan princes marrying Naga princesses. Arjuna met Uloopi when he was in exile. Uloopi wielded great influence on Babhruvahana, the king of Manipur, who was her step-son. Hence her story assumes importance in the Mahabharata.

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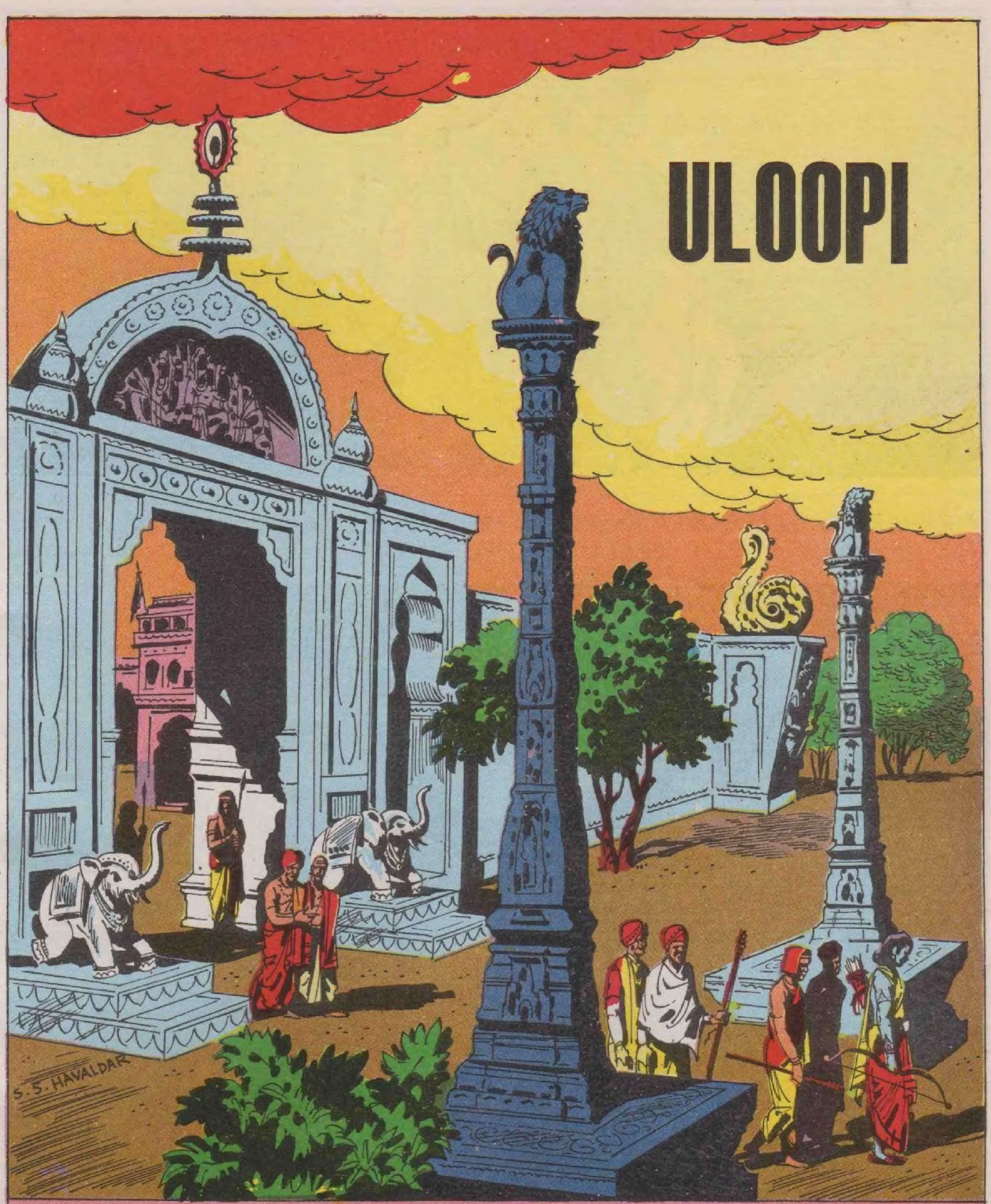


ARJUNA, THE PANDAVA, ONCE BROKE A VOW. FOR THIS OFFENCE, HE HAD TO GO ON AN EXILE FOR TWELVE YEARS. ACCOMPANIED BY BRAHMANS HE SET OUT FROM INDRAPRASTHA, THE CAPITAL.

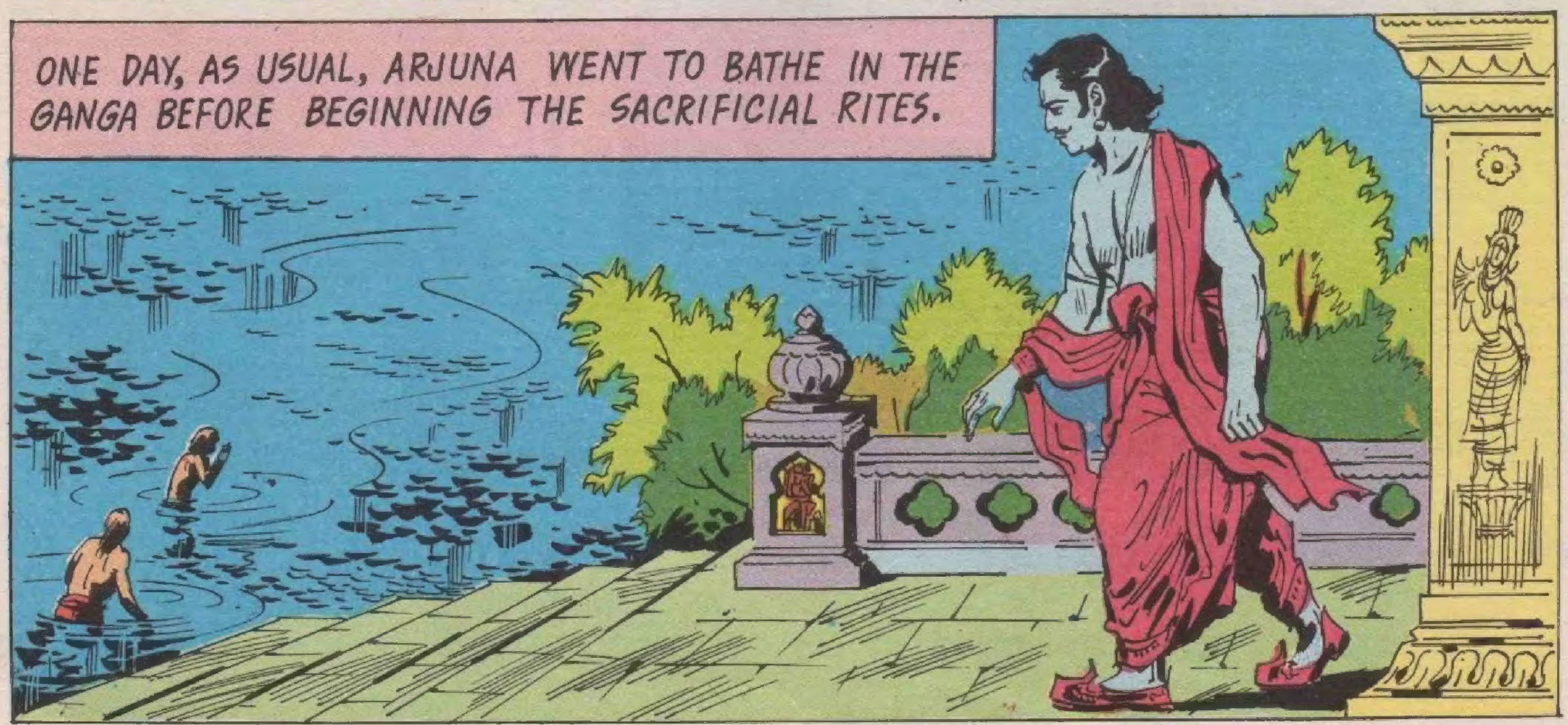
HIS FIRST HALT WAS AT GANGOTRI, THE SOURCE OF THE RIVER GANGA.

WHERE WILL WE GO FROM HERE?

I'LL VISIT THE HOLY PLACES OF THE LAND.

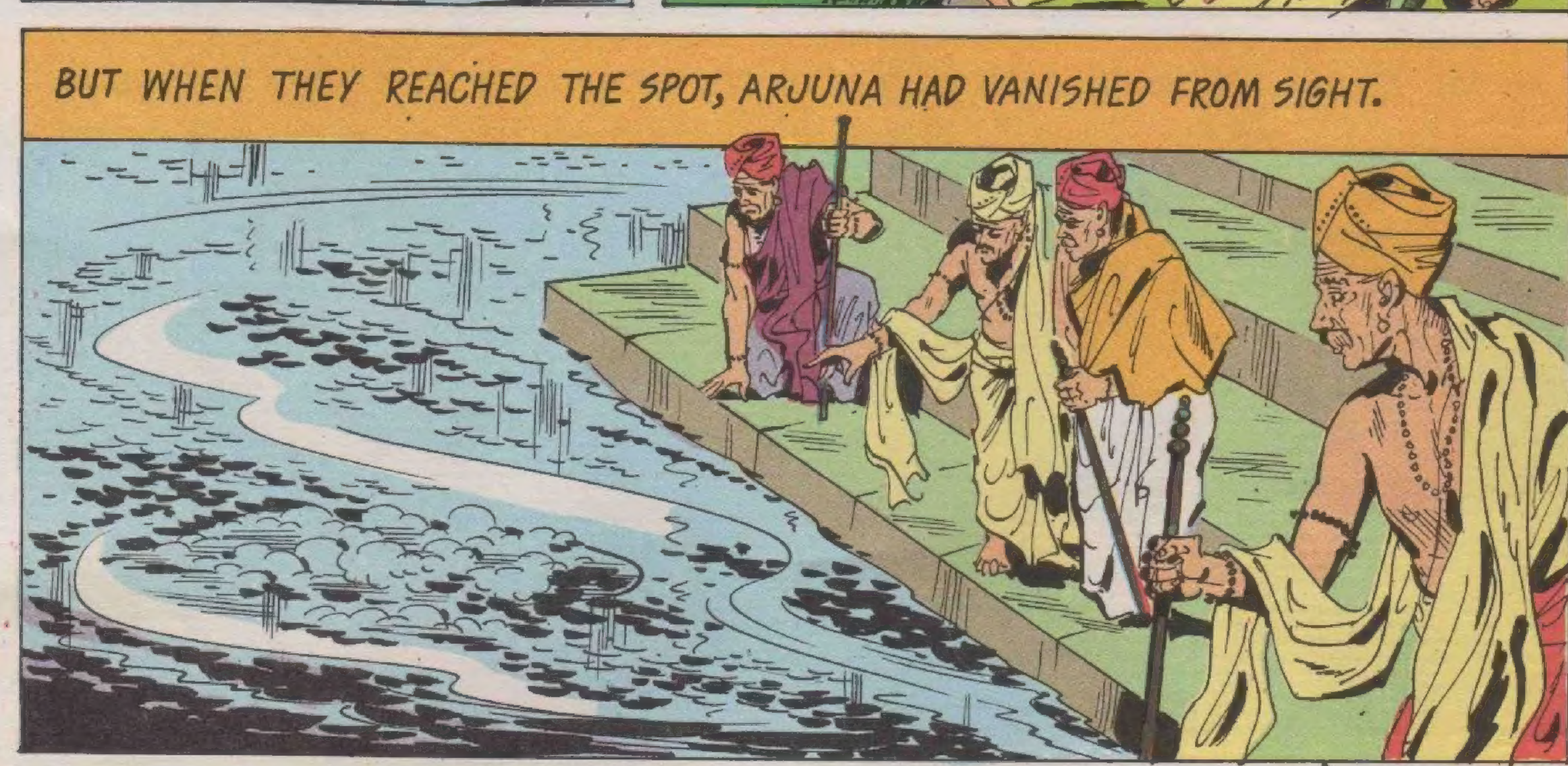
WHEREVER HE WENT, ARJUNA PERFORMED THE FIRE SACRIFICE. HE LOOKED UPON THIS AS HIS SACRED DUTY. SOMETIMES, A FIRE SACRIFICE CONTINUED FOR MANY DAYS.

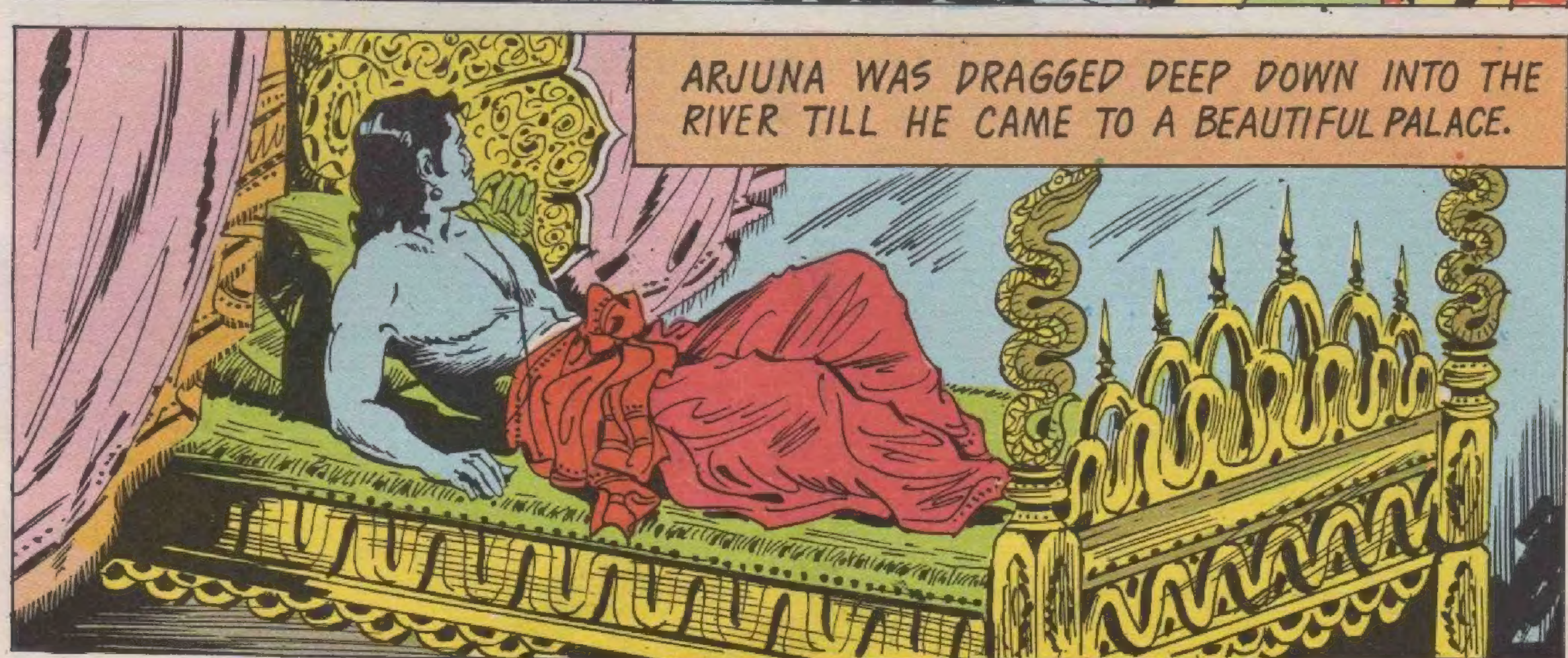
ONE DAY, AS USUAL, ARJUNA WENT TO BATHE IN THE GANGA BEFORE BEGINNING THE SACRIFICIAL RITES.



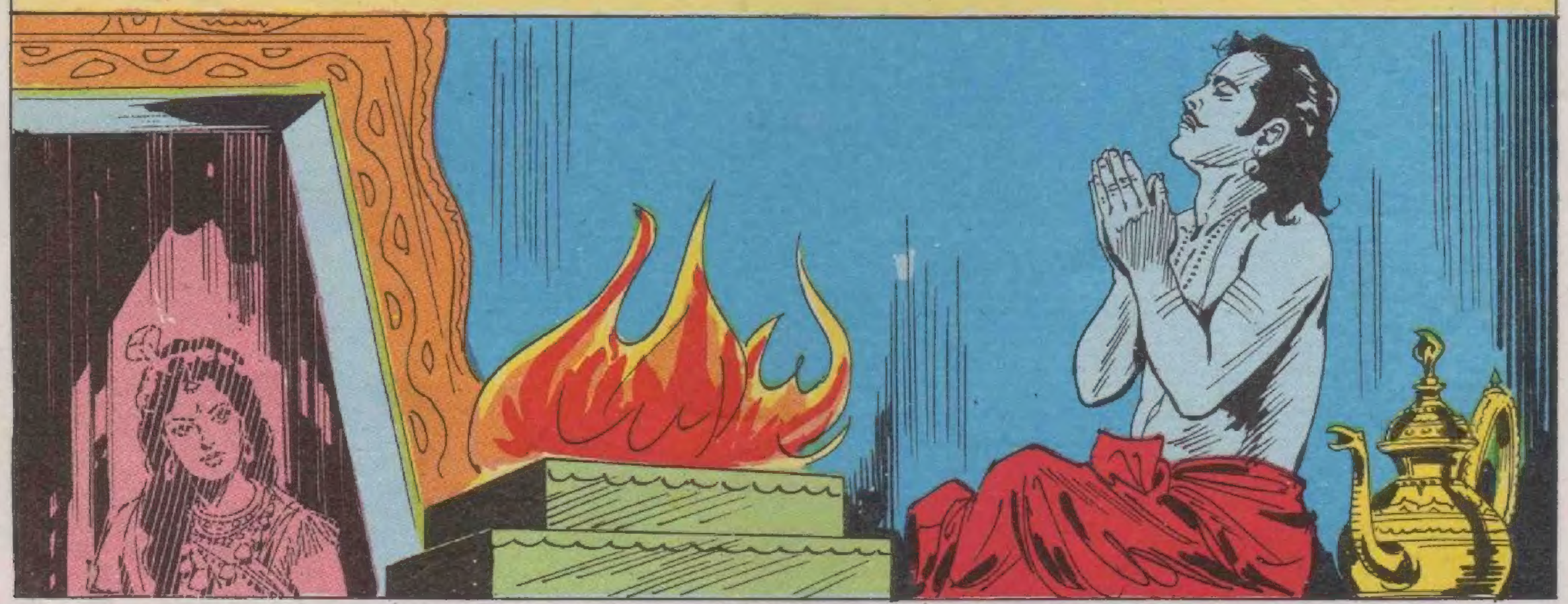
AS HE WAS ABOUT TO STEP OUT—
I FEEL HELPLESS. I CAN'T MOVE A STEP FORWARD. AM I UNDER A SPELL?

THE BRAHMANS RUSHED FORWARD TO HIS RESCUE.


BUT WHEN THEY REACHED THE SPOT, ARJUNA HAD VANISHED FROM SIGHT.

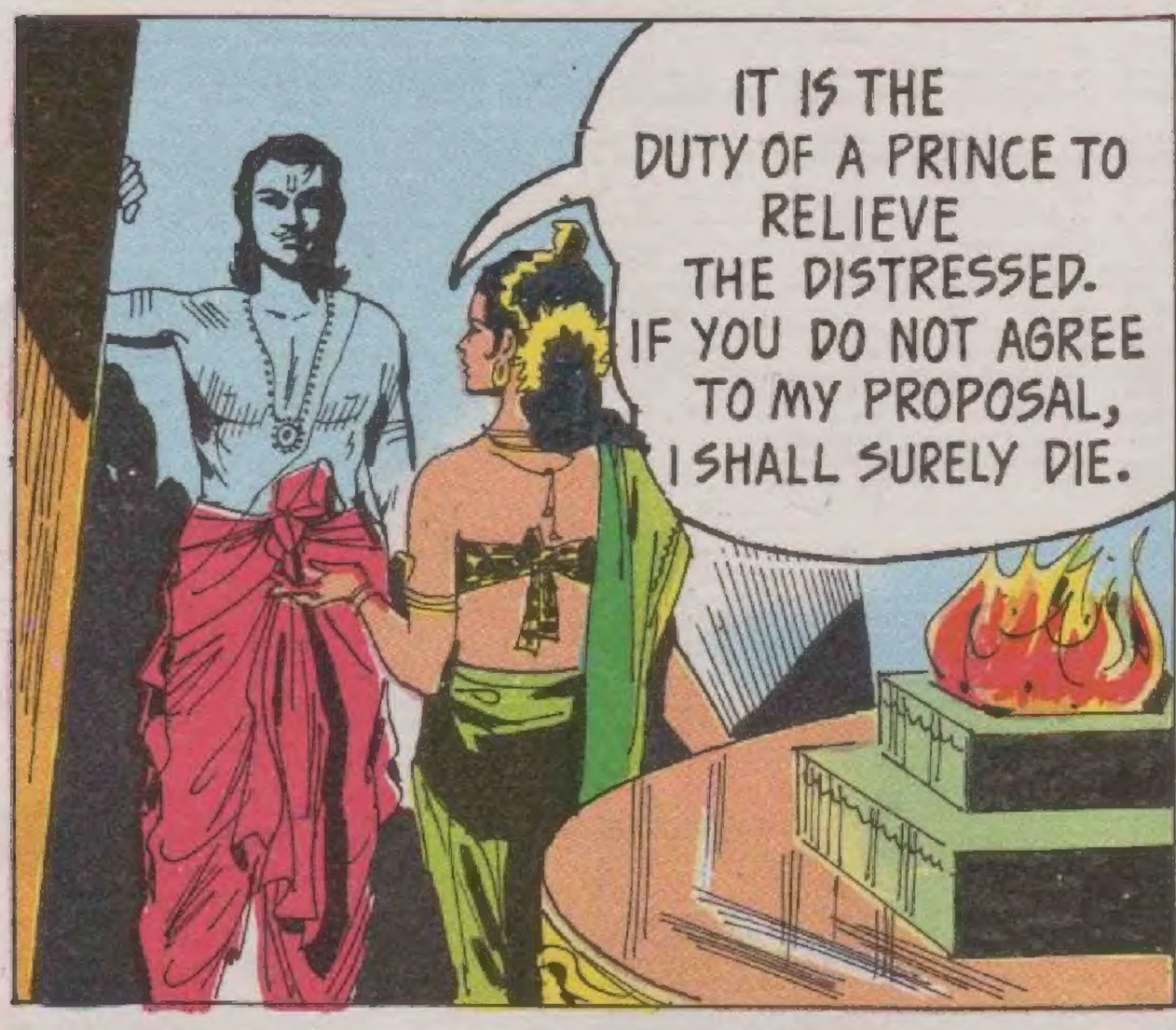

ARJUNA WAS DRAGGED DEEP DOWN INTO THE RIVER TILL HE CAME TO A BEAUTIFUL PALACE.

HE SAT BEFORE THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE AND PERFORMED HIS RITES WITH DEVOTION.



WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?
BECAUSE. I LOVE YOU. PLEASE MAKE ME YOUR WIFE.

HOW CAN THAT BE POSSIBLE? I AM AN EXILED PRINCE.

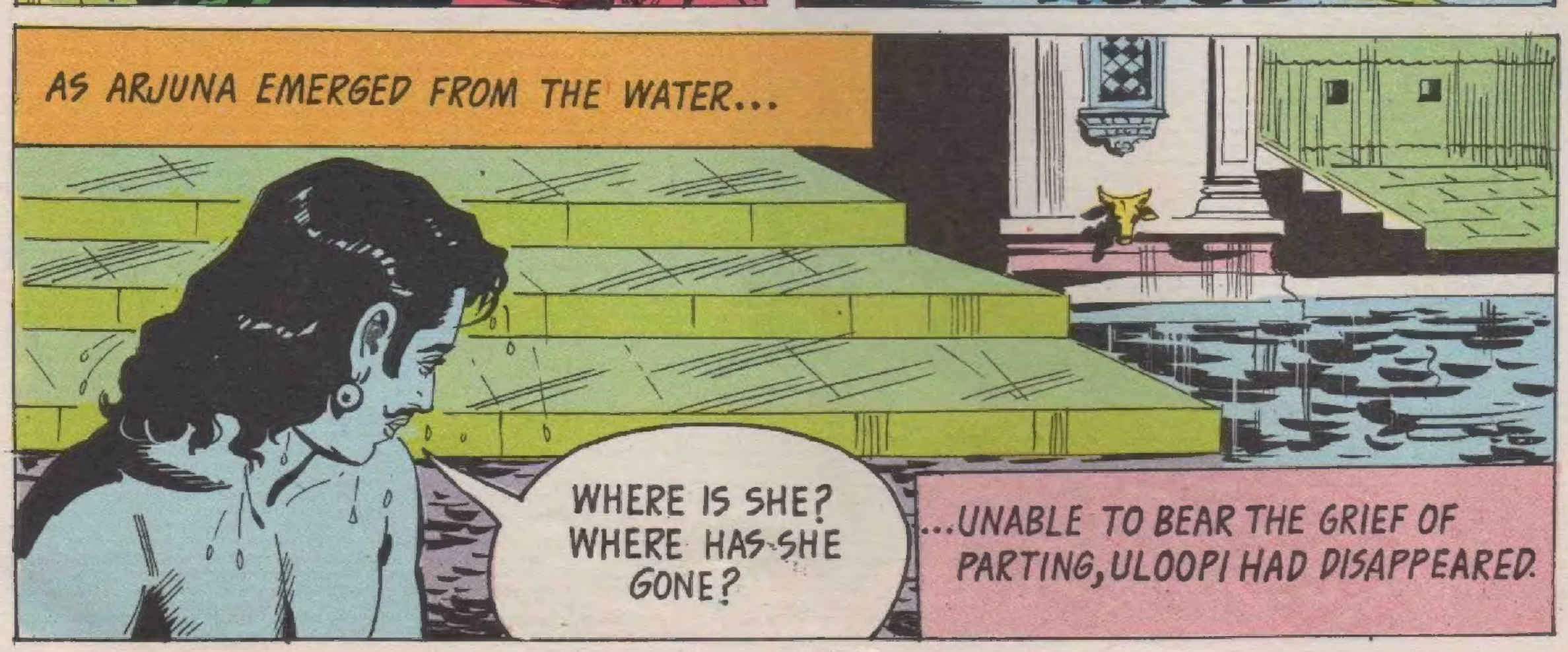

IT IS THE DUTY OF A PRINCE TO RELIEVE THE DISTRESSED. IF YOU DO NOT AGREE TO MY PROPOSAL, I SHALL SURELY DIE.

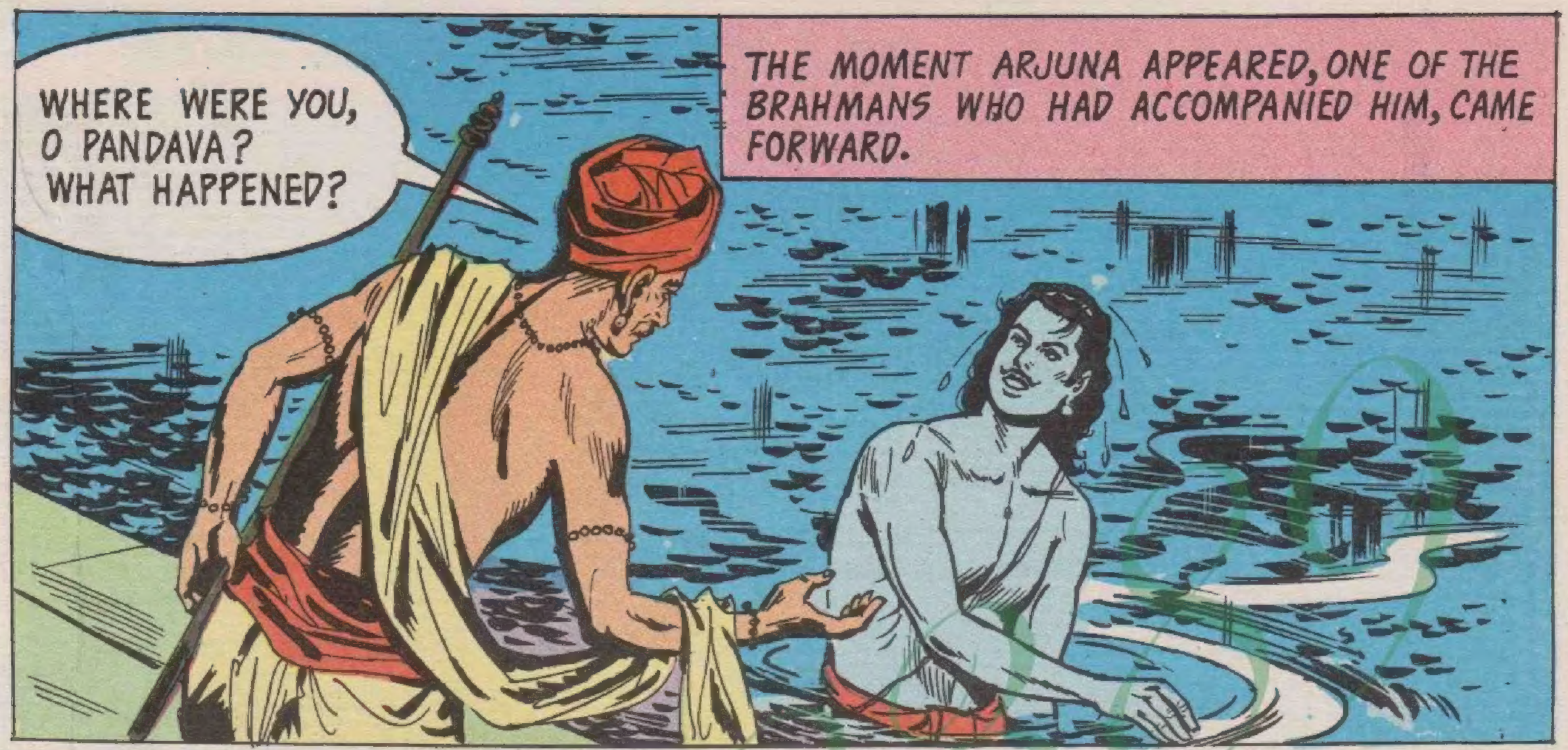
MY FIRE SACRIFICE AT GANGOTRI IS INCOMPLETE.
I WILL TAKE YOU BACK TOMORROW. BUT PLEASE BE WITH ME TODAY.

ARJUNA WAS TOUCHED BY ULOOPI'S PLEADINGS.
I'LL DO WHAT YOU WISH, DEAR ONE!

THROUGHOUT THE HOURS OF HIS STAY, ULOOPI LOOKED AFTER HIS EVERY NEED WITH TENDERNESS AND AFFECTION.

NEXT MORNING—
YOU HAVE SAVED MY LIFE. I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, MY BELOVED HUSBAND. I SHALL TAKE YOU BACK, AS I PROMISED.
ULOOPI LED ARJUNA BACK TO THE SPOT FROM WHERE HER MAGICAL POWERS HAD DRAWN HIM.
HE WILL SOON FORGET ME.


AS ARJUNA EMERGED FROM THE WATER...
WHERE IS SHE? WHERE HAS SHE GONE?
...UNABLE TO BEAR THE GRIEF OF PARTING, ULOOPI HAD DISAPPEARED.

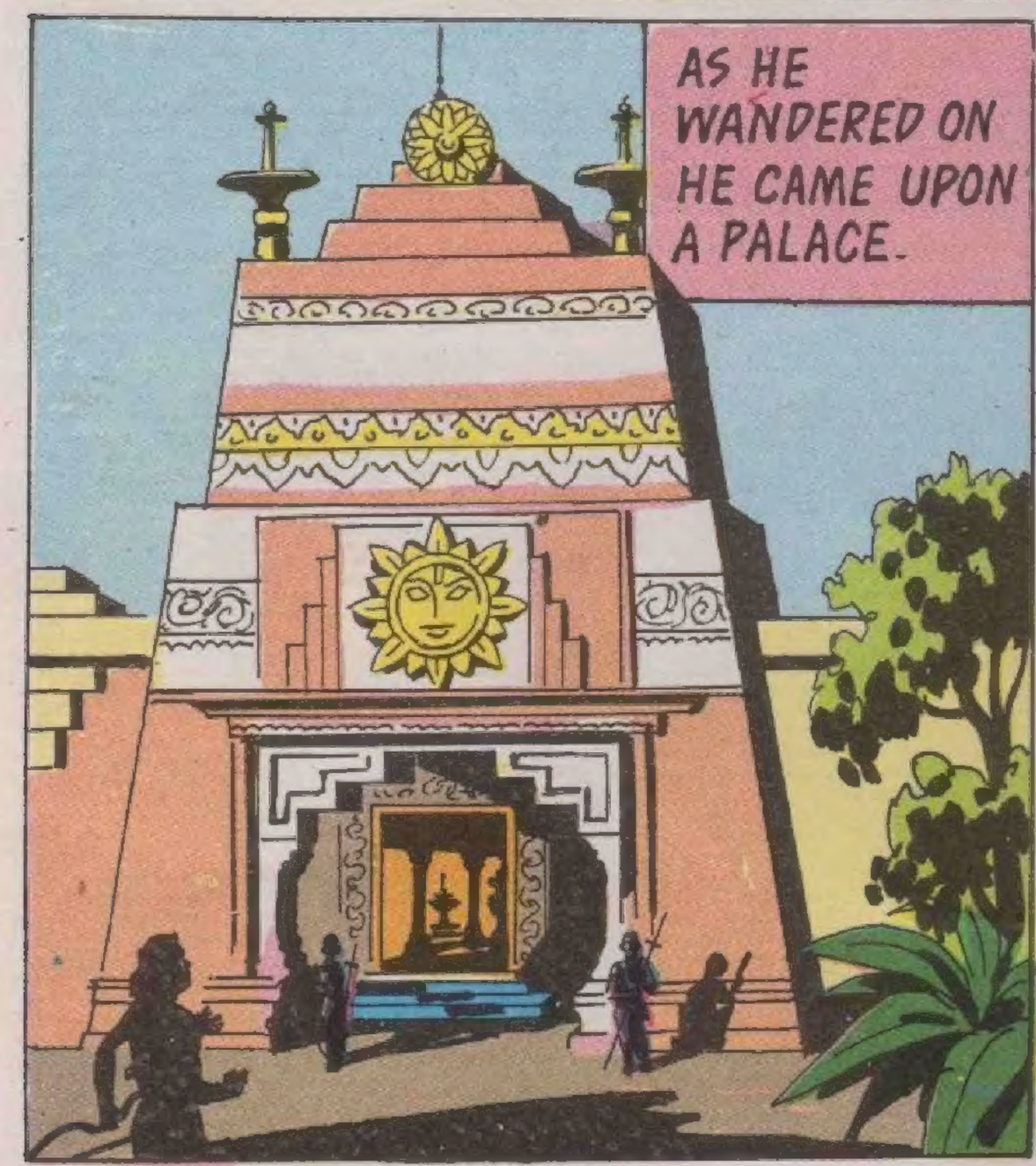

WHERE WERE YOU, O PANDAVA? WHAT HAPPENED?
THE MOMENT ARJUNA APPEARED, ONE OF THE BRAHMANS WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM, CAME FORWARD.

AFTER TELLING THEM IN BRIEF WHAT BEFELL HIM, ARJUNA COMPLETED THE FIRE SACRIFICE.

THEN HE MADE A DECISION.
YOU MAY CONTINUE STAYING HERE IF YOU WISH. I INTEND VISITING THE HOLY PLACES IN THE EAST.

AND LEAVING THE BRAHMANS BEHIND, ARJUNA WENT EASTWARDS.

AFTER A LONG JOURNEY, HE REACHED MANIPUR.

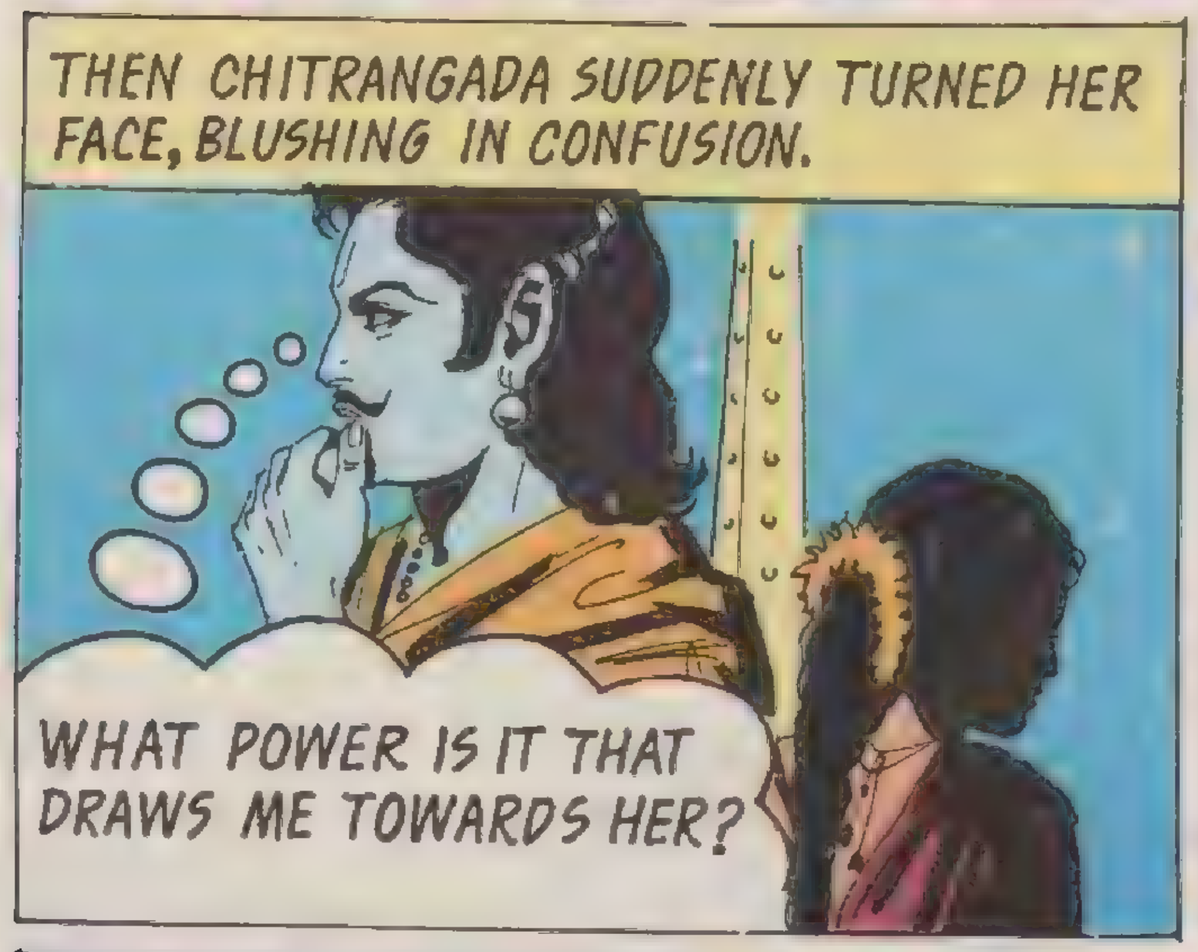

AS HE WANDERED ON HE CAME UPON A PALACE.

HE ENTERED THE PALACE GARDENS...
... AND SUDDENLY STOPPED.

BEFORE HIM STOOD A VERY HANDSOME GIRL.
IS SHE ULOOPI?

HE WENT CLOSER STILL.
NO, SHE IS NOT ULOOPI.
WHO ARE YOU, FAIR MAIDEN?

I AM CHITRANGADA, THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF MANIPUR.


THEN CHITRANGADA SUDDENLY TURNED HER FACE, BLUSHING IN CONFUSION.
WHAT POWER IS IT THAT DRAWS ME TOWARDS HER?

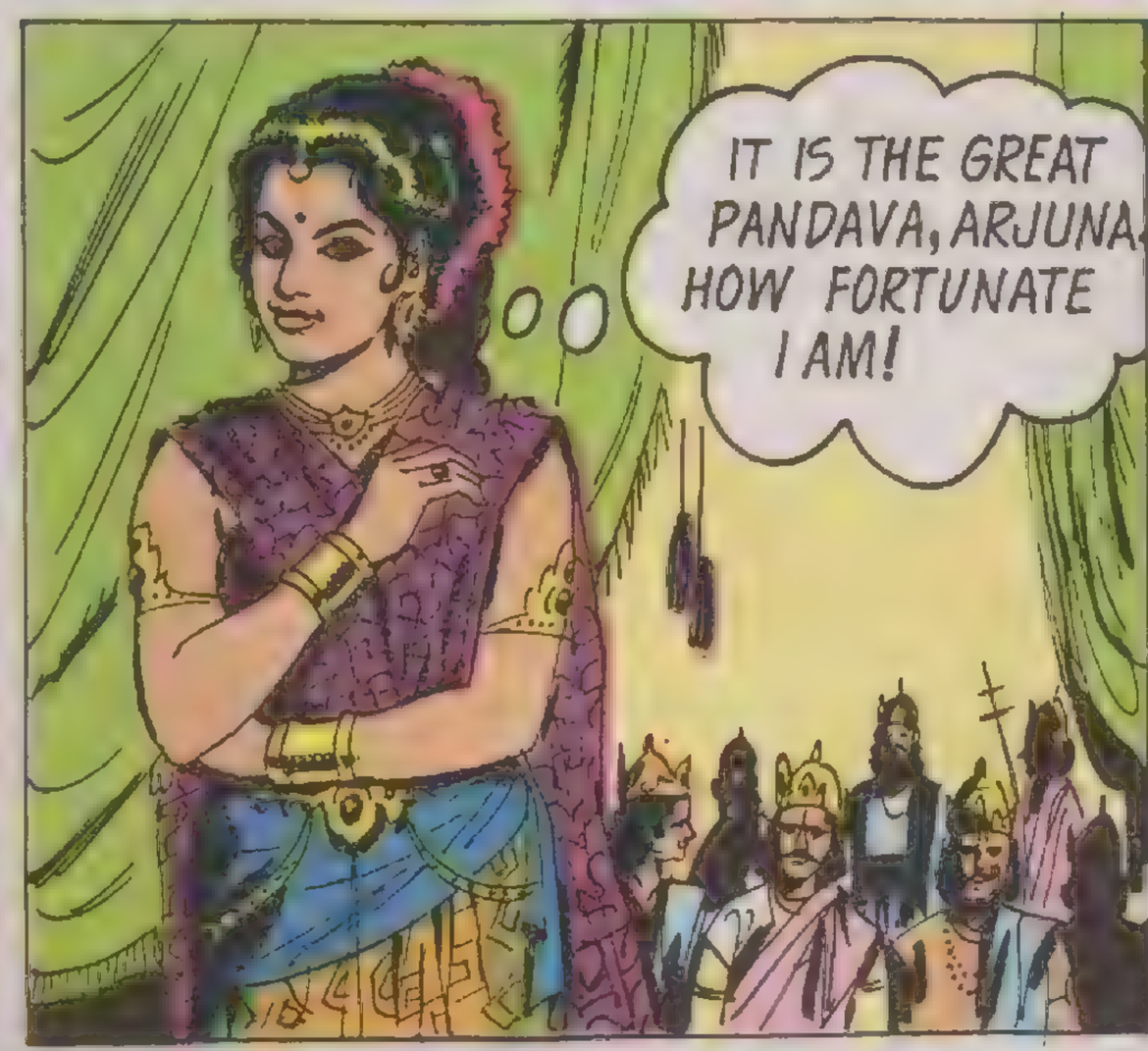
I SHALL SEEK AN AUDIENCE WITH THE KING.

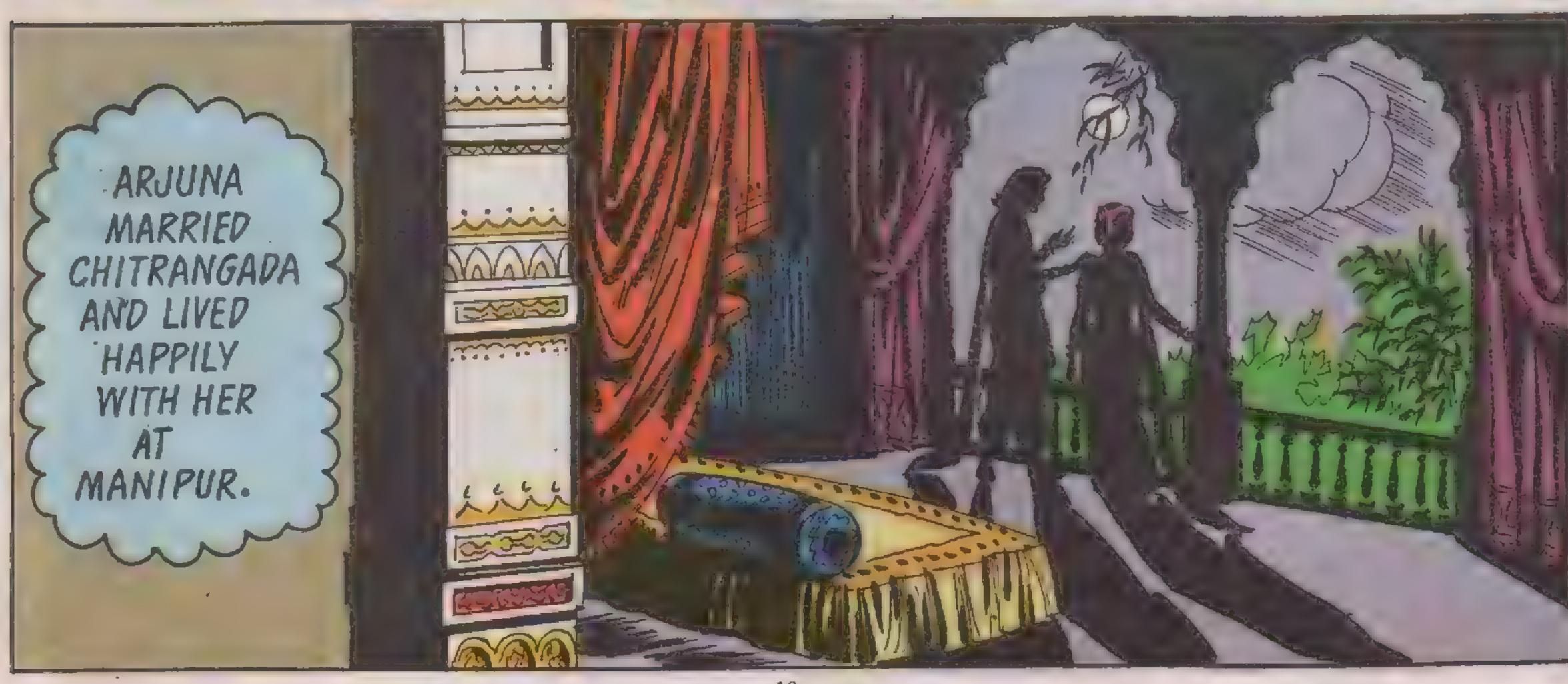
LATER, AT THE COURT—
O KING! I AM A NOBLE KSHATRIYA'S SON. I WISH TO MARRY YOUR DAUGHTER.

WHOSE SON ARE YOU, O VALIANT ONE?
I AM ARJUNA, THE SON OF PANDU.

ARJUNA! THE PANDAVA! YOU SHALL CERTAINLY MARRY MY DAUGHTER BUT...

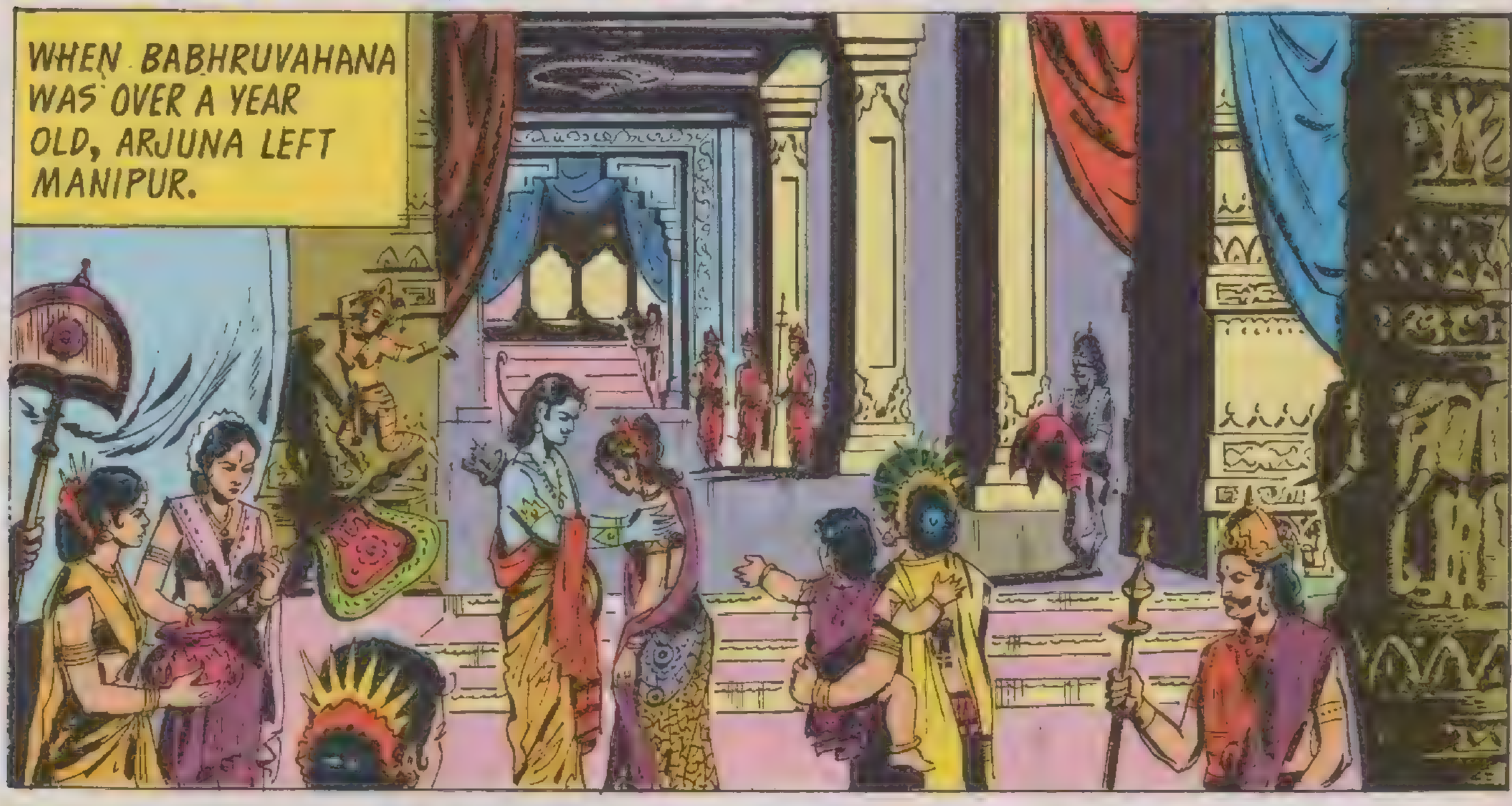
...SHE IS MY ONLY CHILD. THE SON BORN TO HER MUST BECOME MY SUCCESSOR AND RULE MY KINGDOM AFTER ME.
IT SHALL BE AS YOU WISH, O KING.

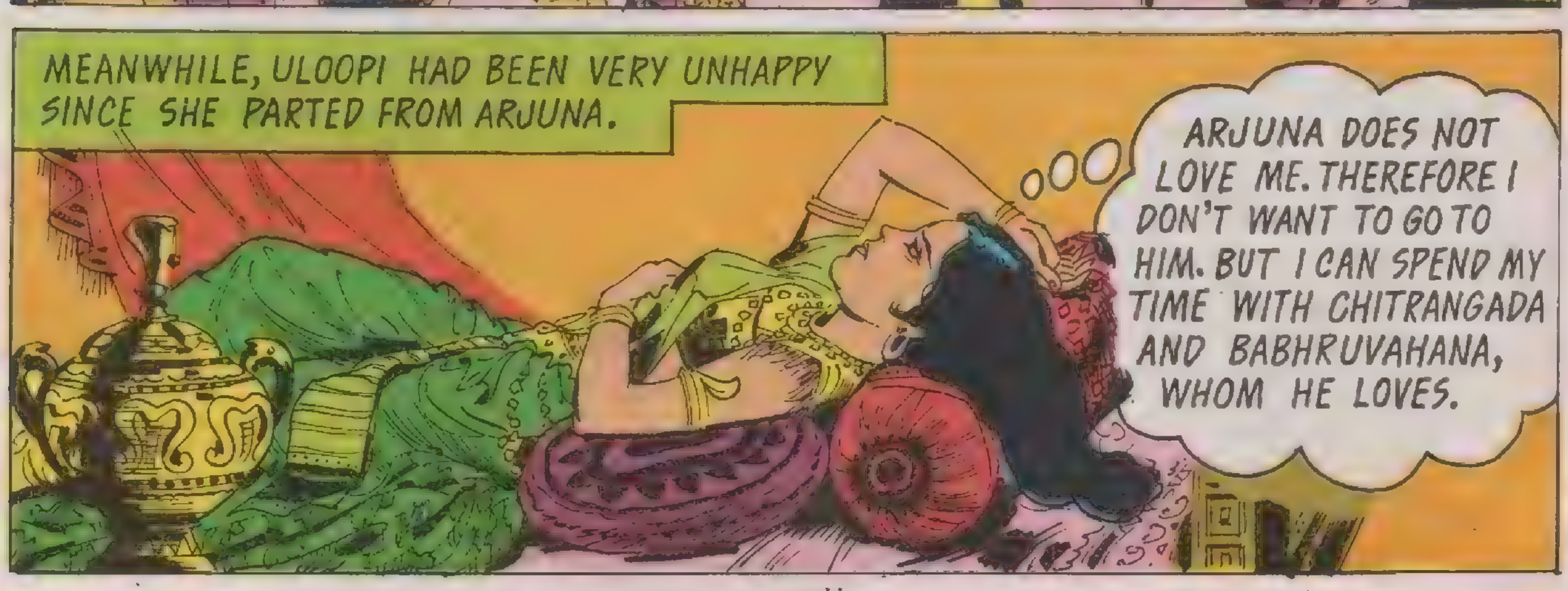

IT IS THE GREAT PANDAVA, ARJUNA. HOW FORTUNATE I AM!


ARJUNA MARRIED CHITRANGADA AND LIVED HAPPILY WITH HER AT MANIPUR.

MONTHS LATER A SON WAS BORN TO THEM.
HE SHALL BE CALLED BABHRUVAHANA.
GOOD. NOW IT IS TIME FOR ME TO CONTINUE ON MY PILGRIMAGE.

PLEASE STAY ON FOR SOME MORE TIME.
AS YOU WISH.


WHEN BABHRUVAHANA WAS OVER A YEAR OLD, ARJUNA LEFT MANIPUR.

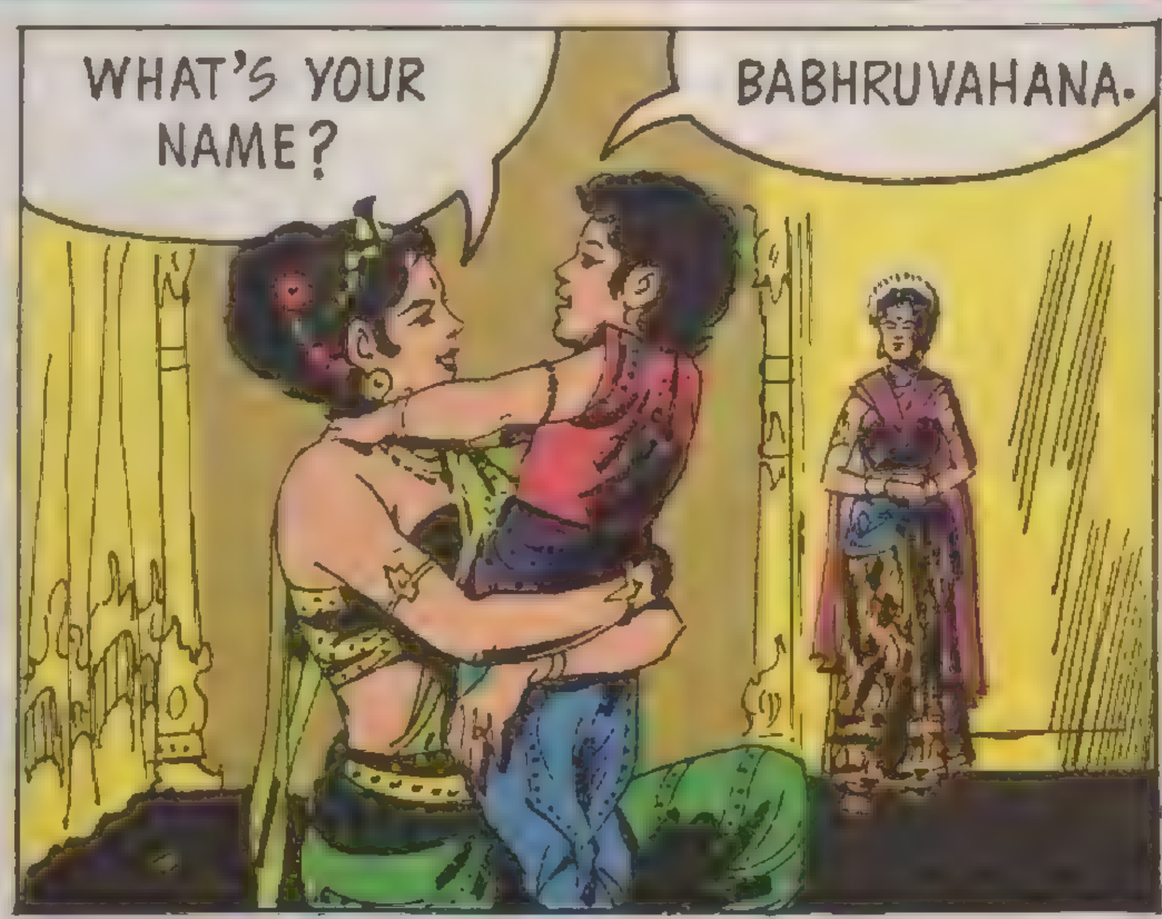

MEANWHILE, ULOOPI HAD BEEN VERY UNHAPPY SINCE SHE PARTED FROM ARJUNA.
ARJUNA DOES NOT LOVE ME. THEREFORE I DON'T WANT TO GO TO HIM. BUT I CAN SPEND MY TIME WITH CHITRANGADA AND BABHRUVAHANA, WHOM HE LOVES.

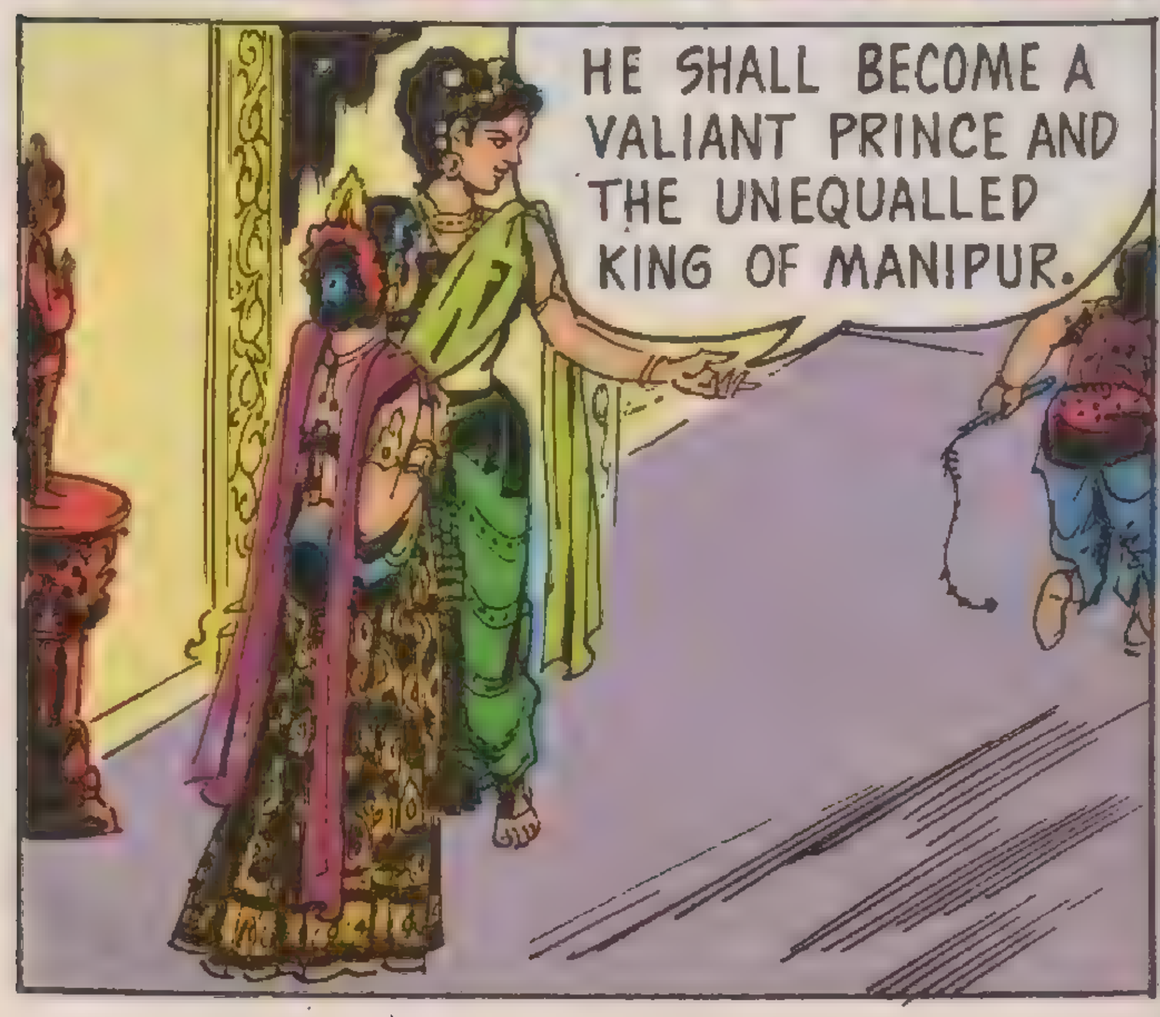
ULOOPI DECIDED TO VISIT CHITRANGADA.

WHO ARE YOU, DEAR MAIDEN?

ULOOPI, THE DAUGHTER OF THE SNAKE-KING, KAURAVYA, YOUR CO-WIFE.

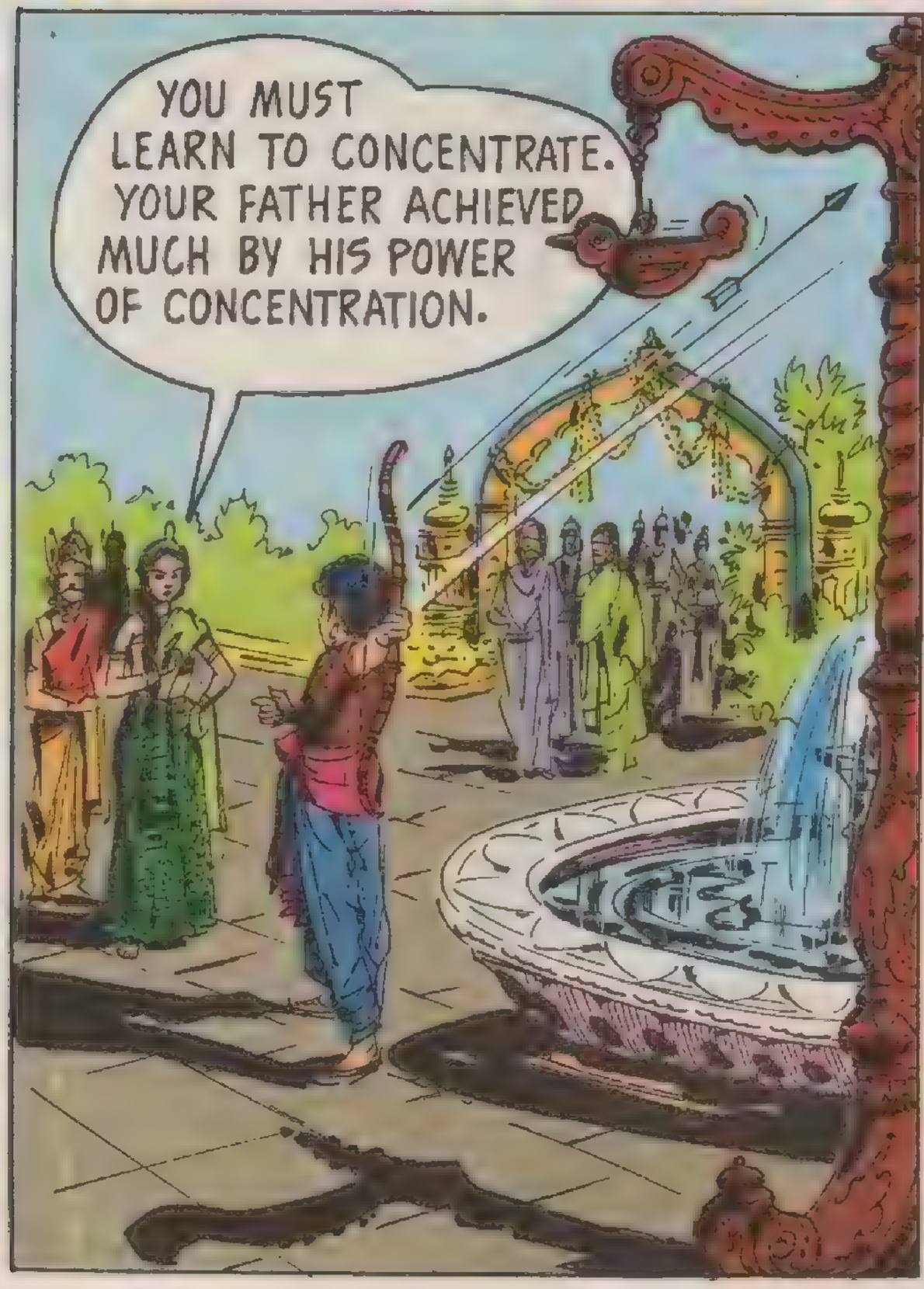
ULOOPI HAD CHANGED HER FORM BY HER MAGICAL POWERS.





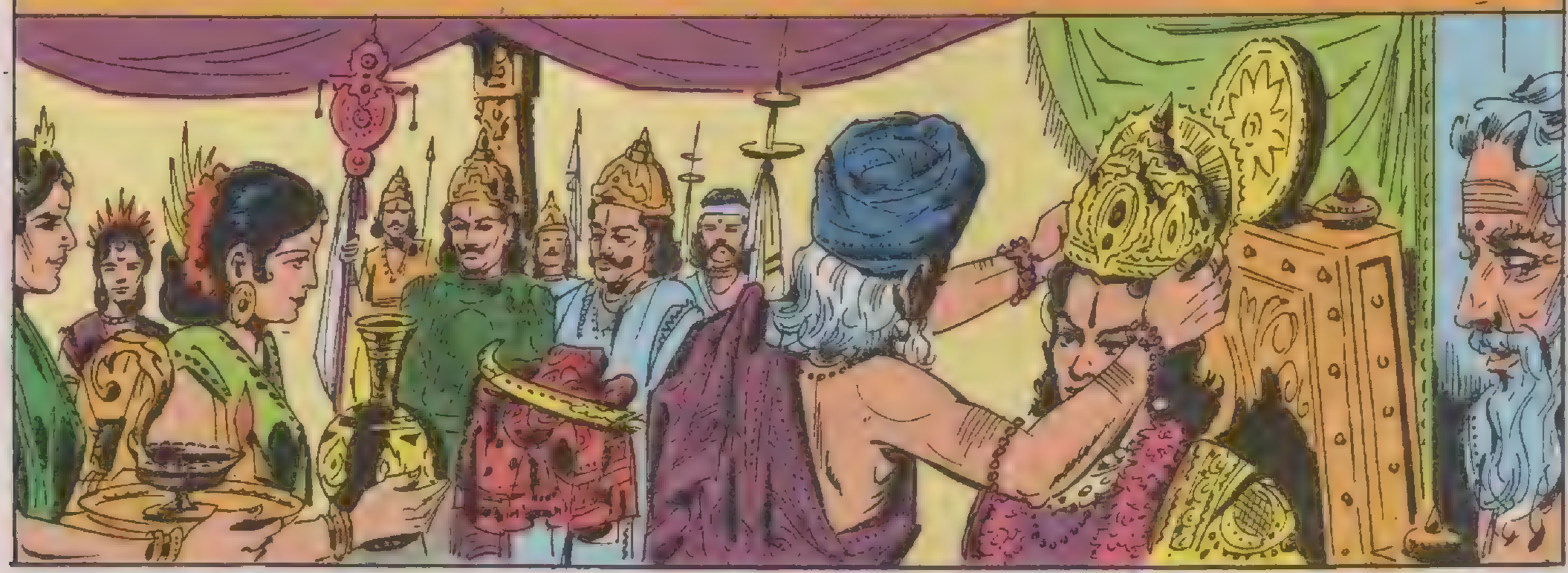
AS BABHRUVAHANA GREW UP, ULOOPI, TRUE TO HER WORD, OFTEN VISITED. SHE WIELDED A GREAT INFLUENCE OVER HIM.

IF YOU DO NOT PRACTISE YOUR ARCHERY, YOU WILL NEVER BECOME A GREAT HERO LIKE YOUR FATHER, ARJUNA.

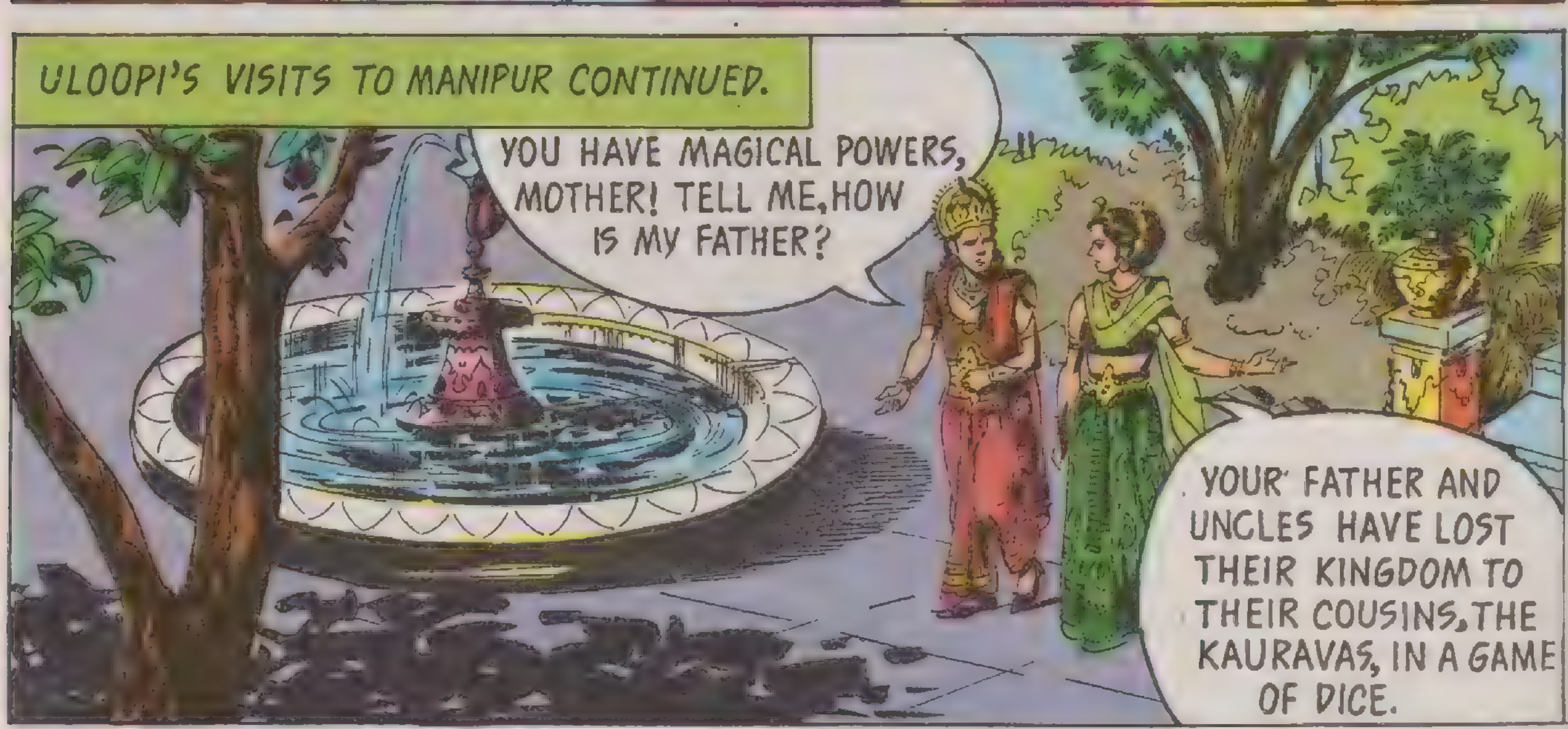


ULOOPI TOLD HIM STORIES ABOUT ARJUNA'S ACHIEVEMENTS.

AND WHEN BABHRUVAHANA BECAME KING, AFTER HIS GRANDFATHER'S DEATH HE BECAME A FIT SUCCESSOR.



ULOOPI'S VISITS TO MANIPUR CONTINUED.



ONE DAY—

MEANWHILE, AT THE BATTLE OF KURUKSHETRA, ARJUNA, SHIELDED BY SHIKHANDI, SHOWERED A VOLLEY OF ARROWS ON BHEESHMA, THE COMMANDER OF THE KAURAVAS.

BHEESHMA FELL, WOUNDED.

ALL THE CELESTIALS HAD GATHERED IN THE SKY TO WITNESS THIS BATTLE.

AMONG THEM WERE THE VASUS, THE BROTHERS OF BHEESHMA.

THAT WAS UNFAIR.

ARJUNA SHOULD BE PUNISHED.

THE VASUS WENT TO GANGA, THEIR MOTHER.

ARJUNA HAS SINNED. FOR THIS HE SHOULD GO TO HELL WHEN HE DIES.

SO BE IT.

ULOOPI, UNOBSERVED, HEARD EVERYTHING.

MY HUSBAND DOES NOT DESERVE SUCH A FATE. WORSE SINS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF KURUKSHETRA.

SHE WENT TO HER FATHER, KAURAVYA.

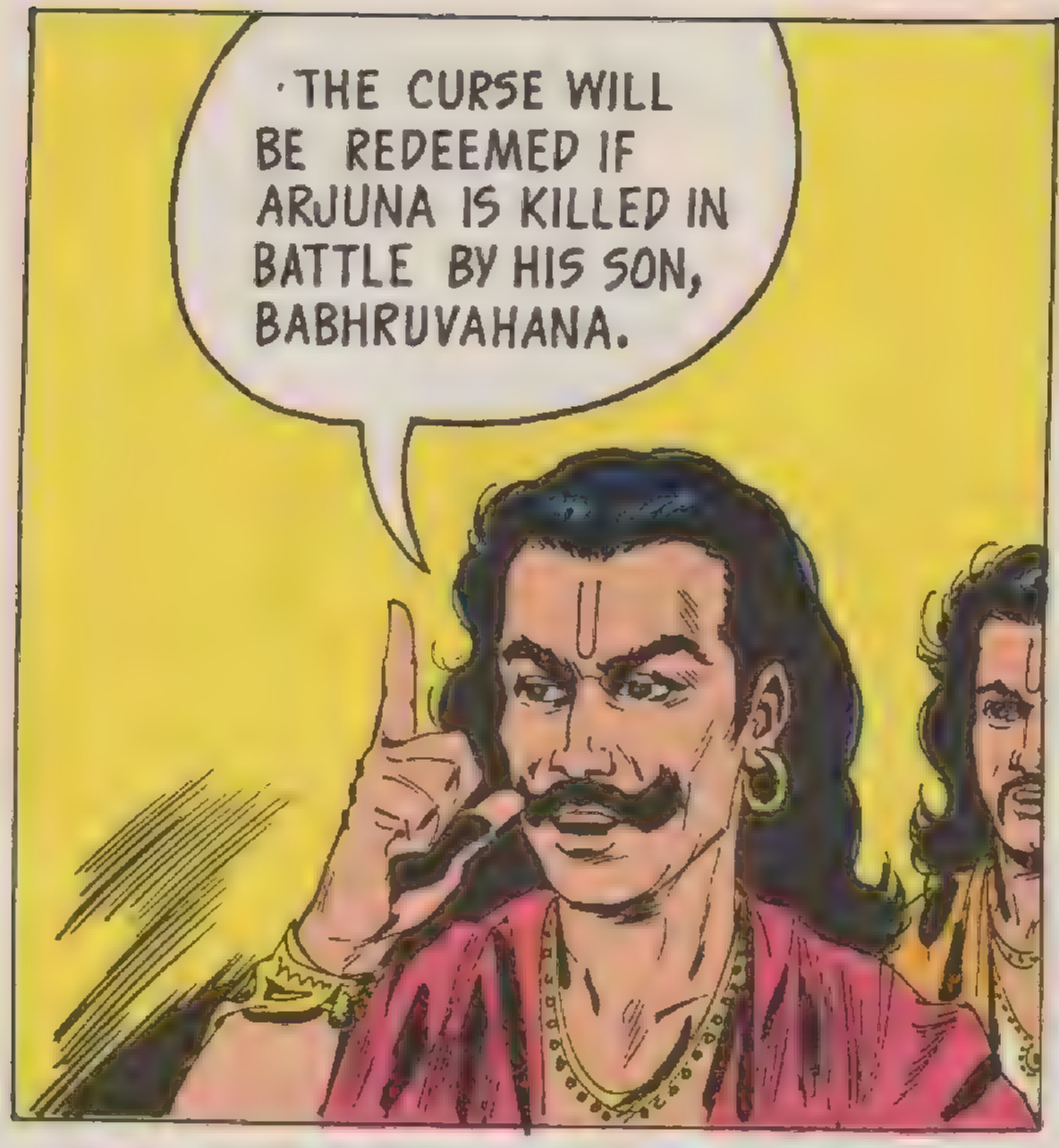
FATHER, PLEASE SAVE MY HUSBAND FROM HELL.

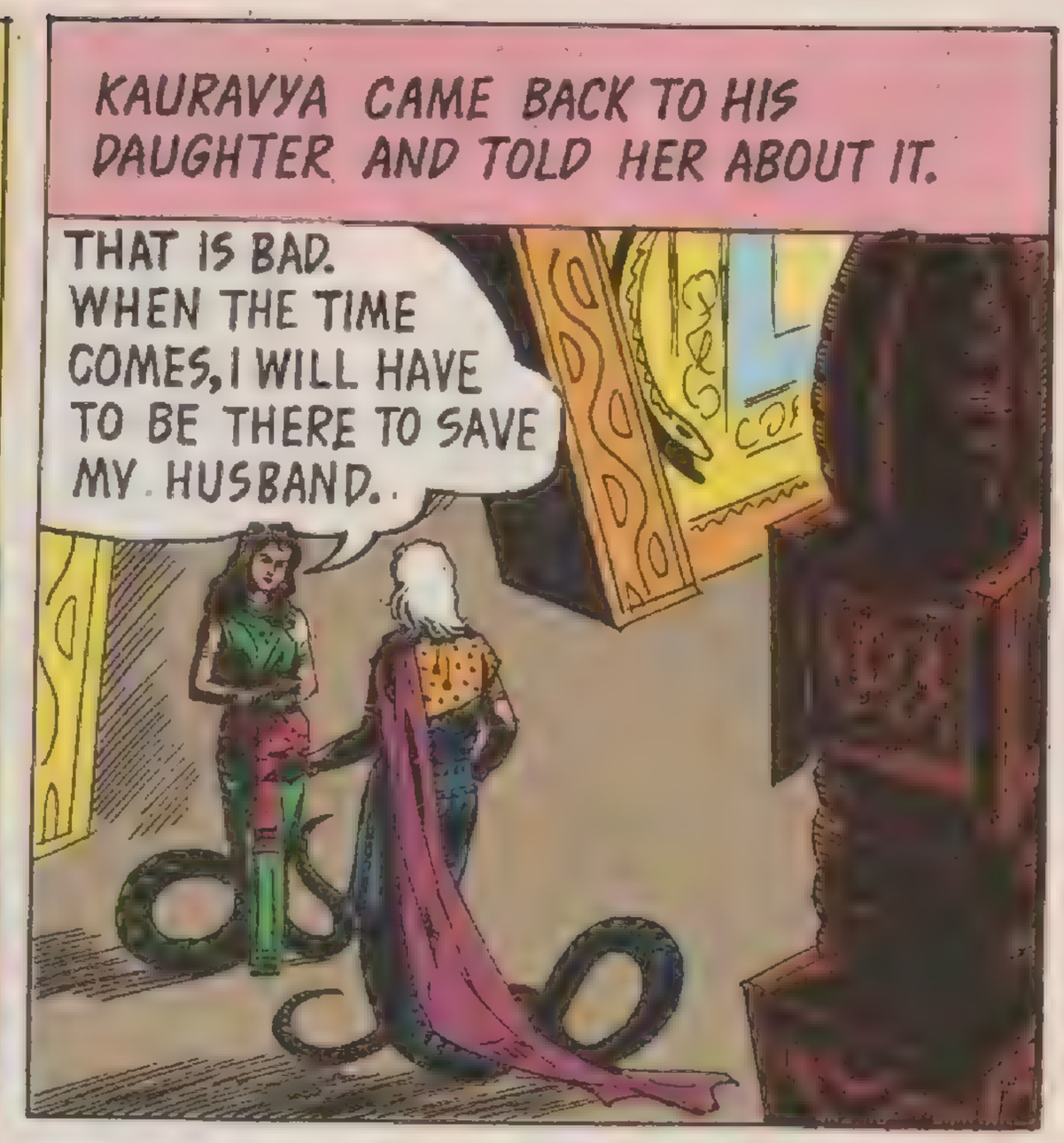
DON'T WORRY, MY CHILD.

KAURAVYA PROPITIATED THE VASUS.

WHAT BOON DO YOU SEEK, KAURAVYA?

LET THE CURSE ON ARJUNA BE LIFTED!





MEANWHILE, THE PANDAVAS HAD WON THE WAR AGAINST THE KAURAVAS...

... AND YUDHISHTHIRA, THE ELDEST OF THE PANDAVAS, WAS CROWNED KING.

SOON AFTERWARDS, YUDHISHTHIRA, DECIDED TO PERFORM THE HORSE SACRIFICE.

LET THE HORSE WANDER AT WILL OVER THE WHOLE EARTH, PROCLAIMING YOUR GLORY, O KING!

WHEN THE HORSE FOR THE SACRIFICE WAS SELECTED—

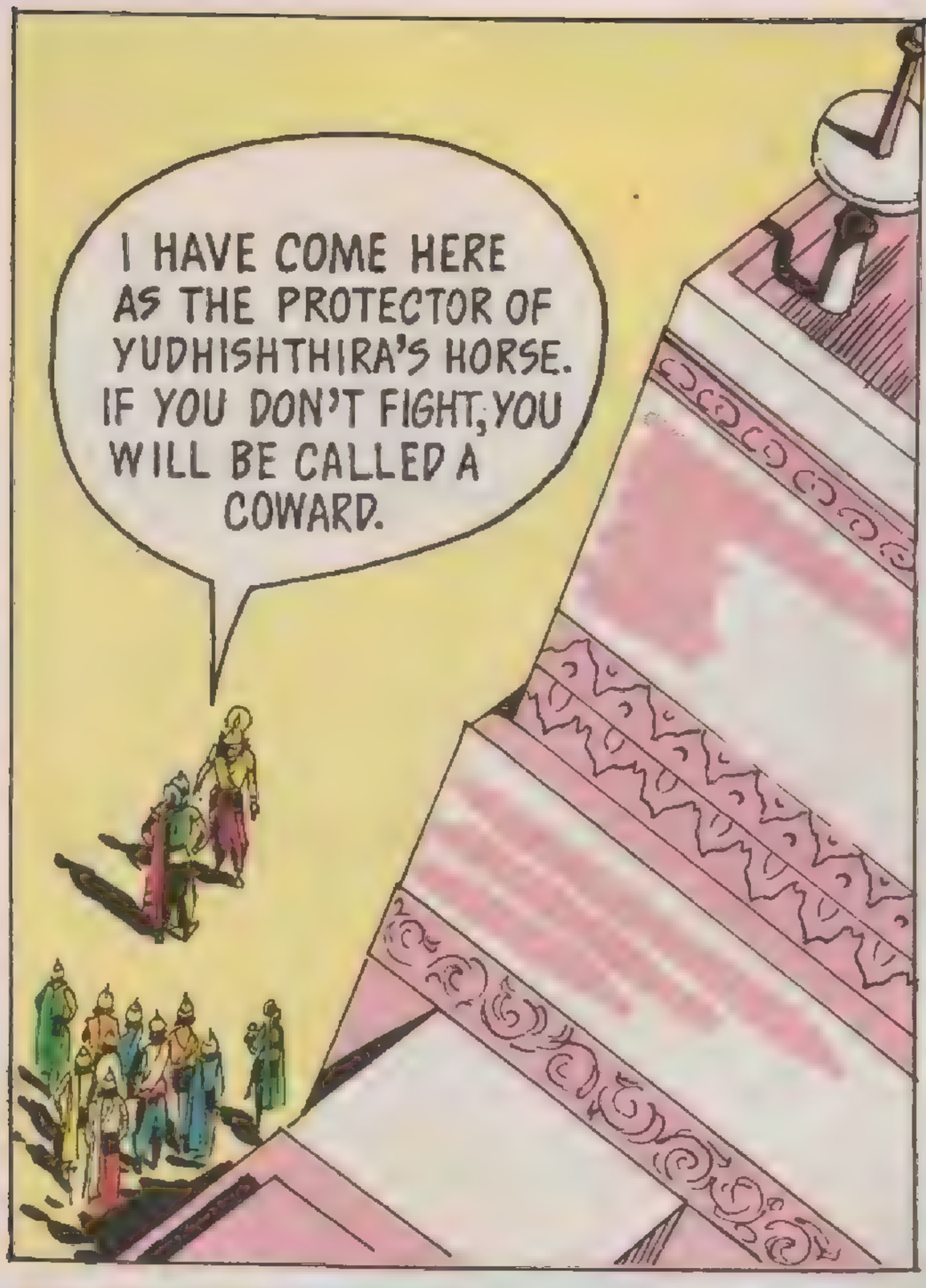
ARJUNA, YOU WILL PROTECT THE HORSE. YOU ALONE CAN DO IT.

AS THE HORSE WAS LET LOOSE AND ARJUNA PREPARED TO FOLLOW HIM—

THAT IS THE HORSE. IT WILL ROAM ABOUT IN DISTANT LANDS. IF ANY KING STOPS IT, HE WILL HAVE TO FIGHT WITH ARJUNA AND HIS ARMY.

AND IF A KING PERMITS THAT HORSE TO ROAM IN HIS KINGDOM, HE ACKNOWLEDGES YUDHISHTHIRA AS HIS SUPERIOR.

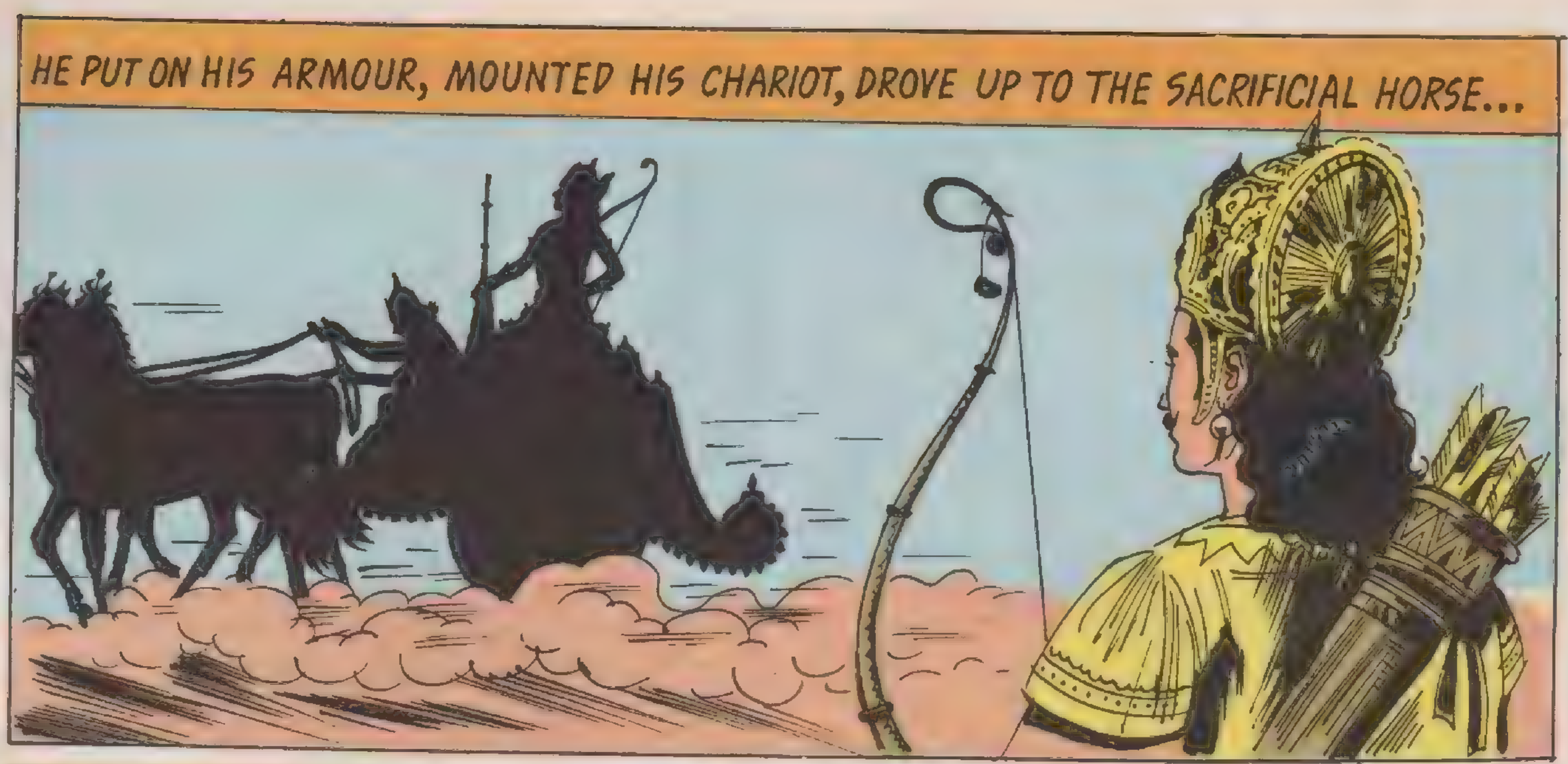
ARJUNA FOLLOWED THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE AS IT WANDERED AT WILL THROUGH VARIOUS KINGDOMS EITHER WINNING OR CONQUERING ALLIES FOR THE PANDAVAS.
AT LAST, THE HORSE ARRIVED AT THE KINGDOM OF MANIPUR.
A GREAT KINGDOM! MY SON IS ITS KING. I HOPE, HE PREPARES TO FIGHT WITH ME LIKE A TRUE KSHATRIYA.
BUT BABHRUVAHANA CAME FORWARD TO WELCOME HIM.
FATHER, I AM PROUD TO BE YOUR SON. I WELCOME YOU TO MY KINGDOM.
OH KING! THIS IS NOT PROPER. YOU HAVE FAILED IN YOUR DUTIES.

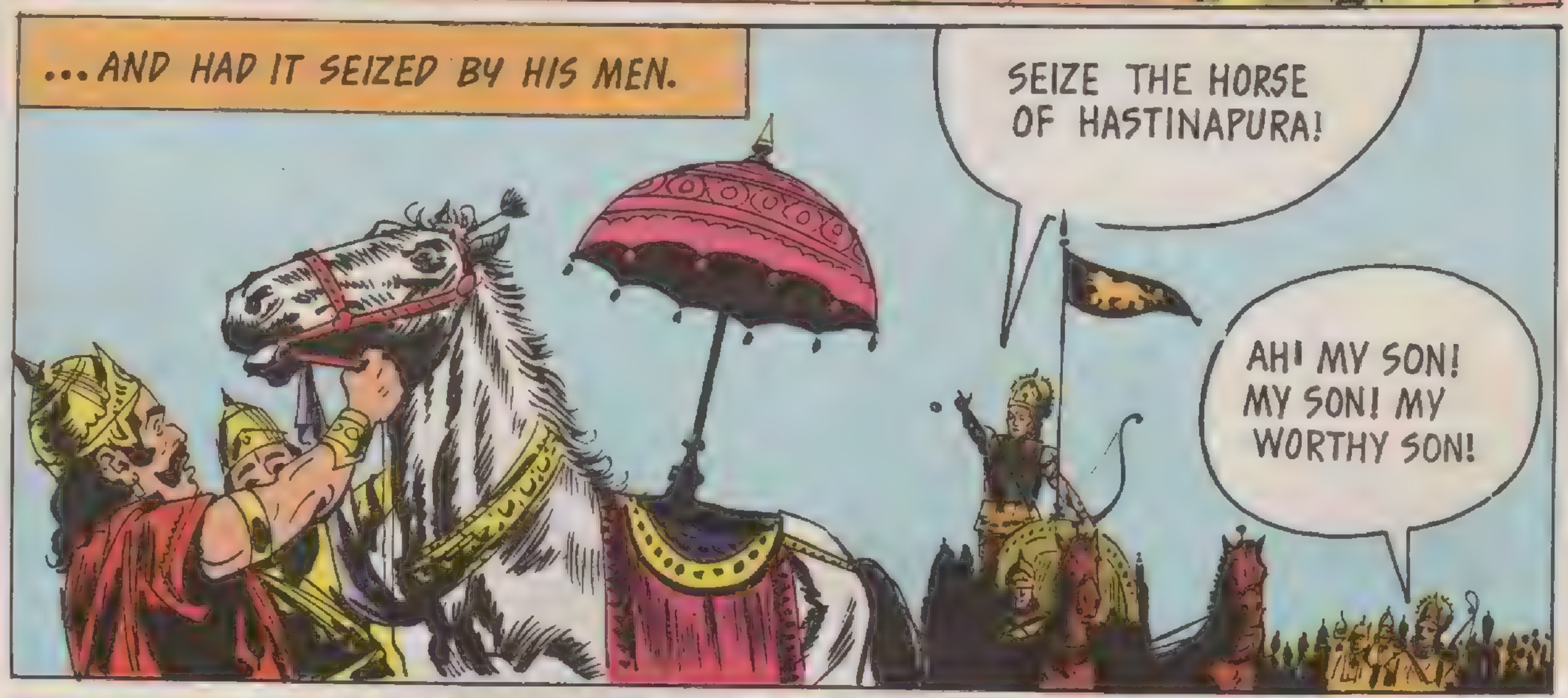

I HAVE COME HERE AS THE PROTECTOR OF YUDHISHTHIRA'S HORSE. IF YOU DON'T FIGHT, YOU WILL BE CALLED A COWARD.

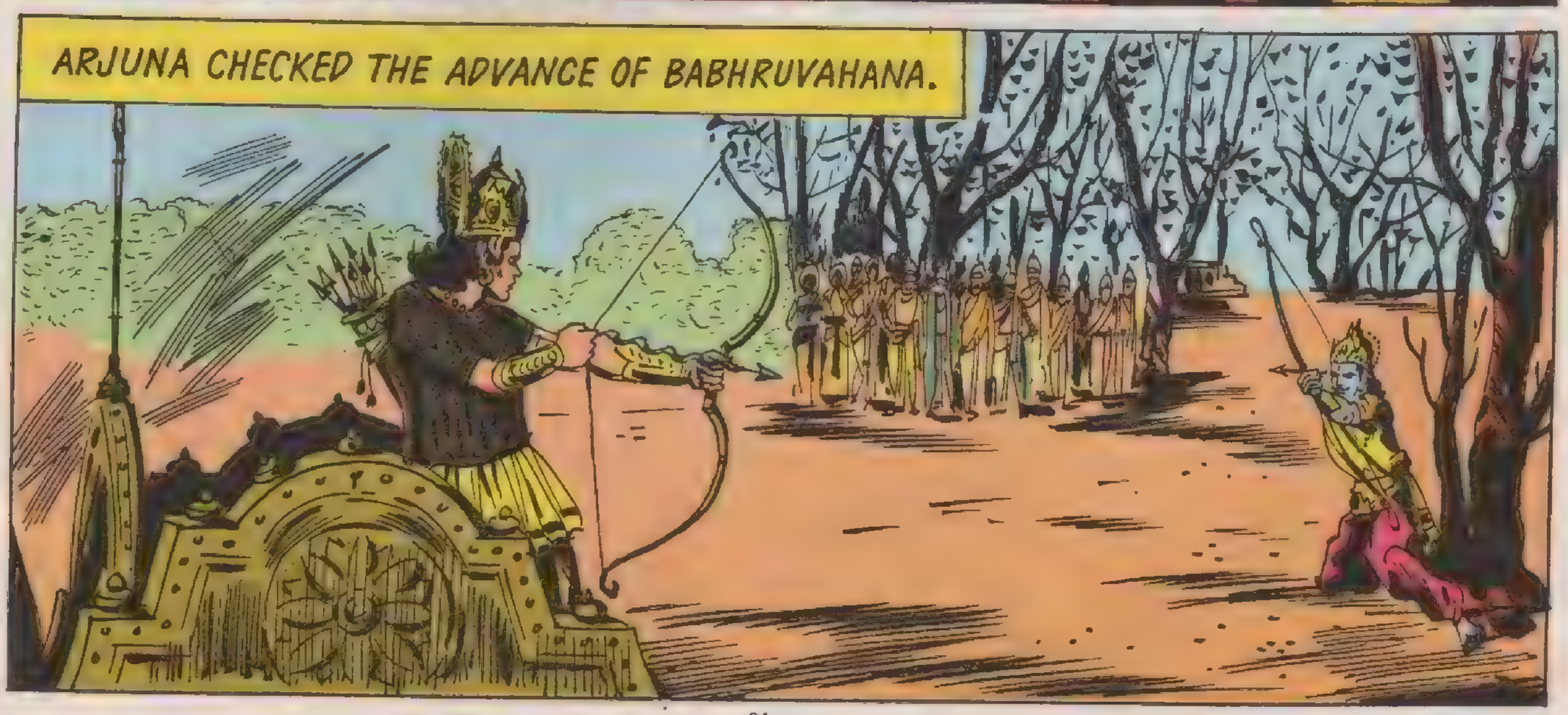
BABHRUVAHANA WAS STUNNED BY THESE WORDS.
HOW CAN I FIGHT MY BELOVED FATHER?

JUST THEN, ULOOPI ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.
DO AS I TELL YOU, MY SON. DO NOT HESITATE. FIGHT YOUR FATHER. IT IS THE ONLY RIGHTEOUS AND DUTIFUL THING FOR YOU TO DO.

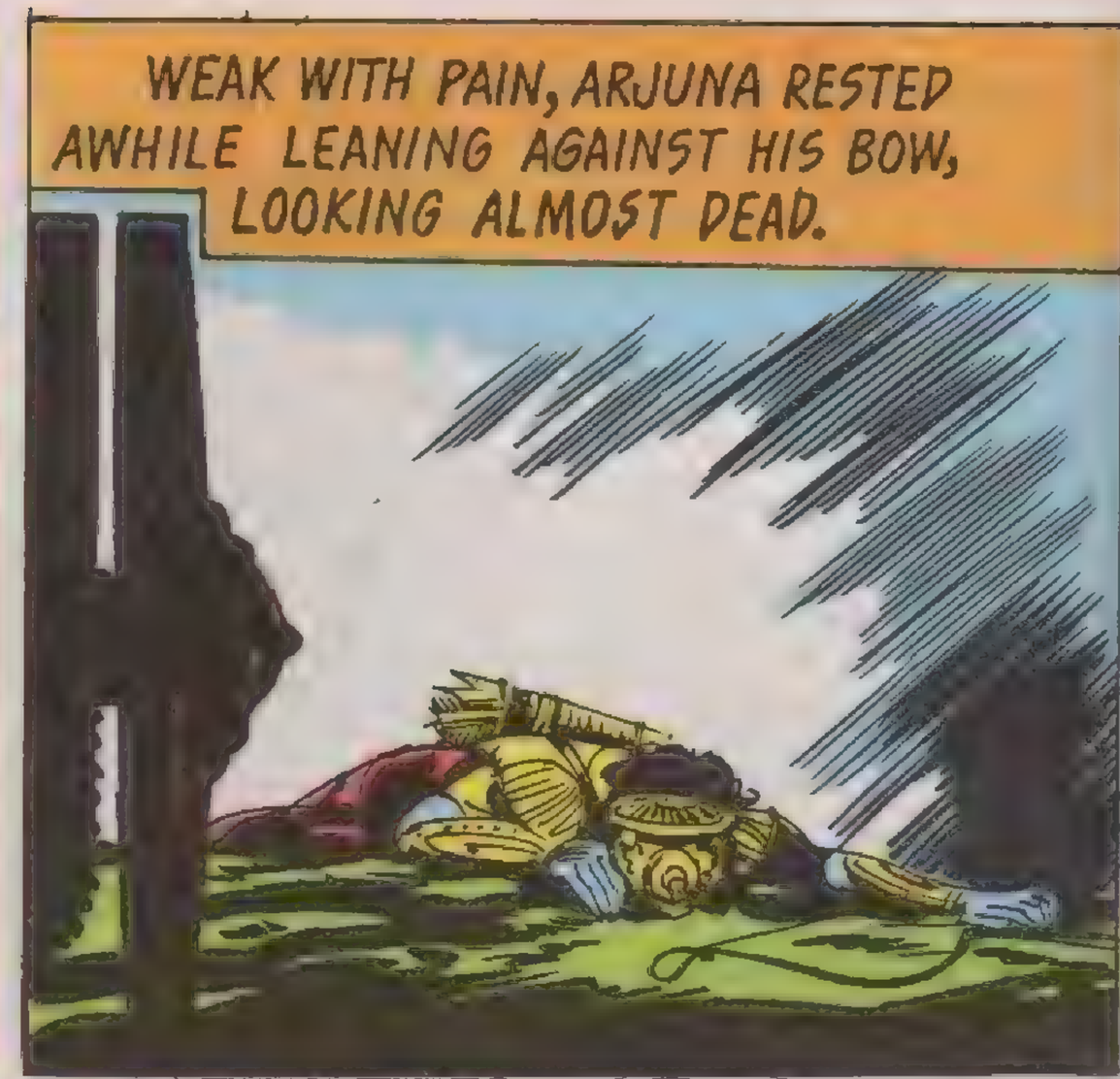
BABHRUVAHANA THOUGHT FOR A WHILE.
I HAVE LOST MY FATHER'S RESPECT. I CAN WIN IT BACK ONLY BY FIGHTING HIM. I WILL FIGHT.


HE PUT ON HIS ARMOUR, MOUNTED HIS CHARIOT, DROVE UP TO THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE...


...AND HAD IT SEIZED BY HIS MEN.
SEIZE THE HORSE OF HASTINAPURA!
AH! MY SON! MY SON! MY WORTHY SON!

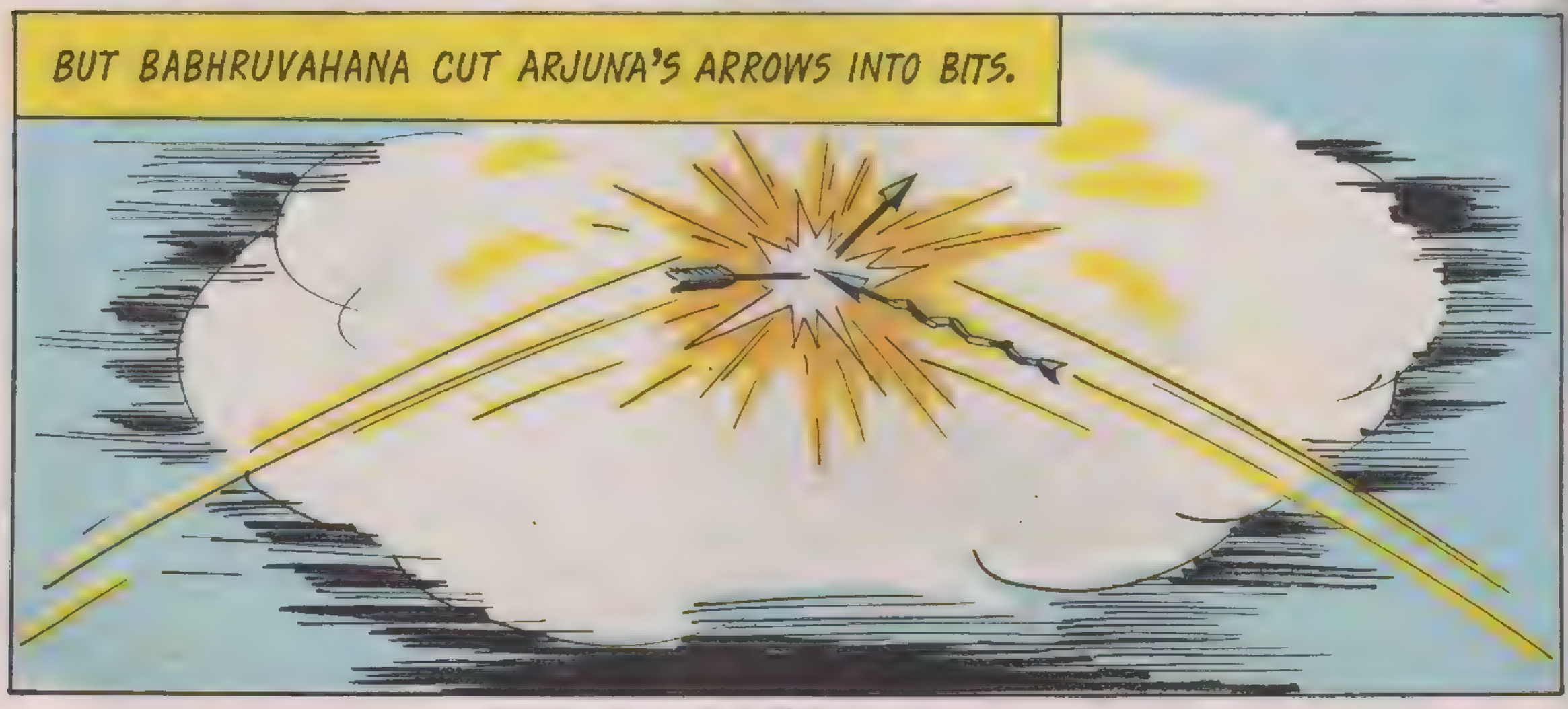

ARJUNA CHECKED THE ADVANCE OF BABHRUVAHANA.

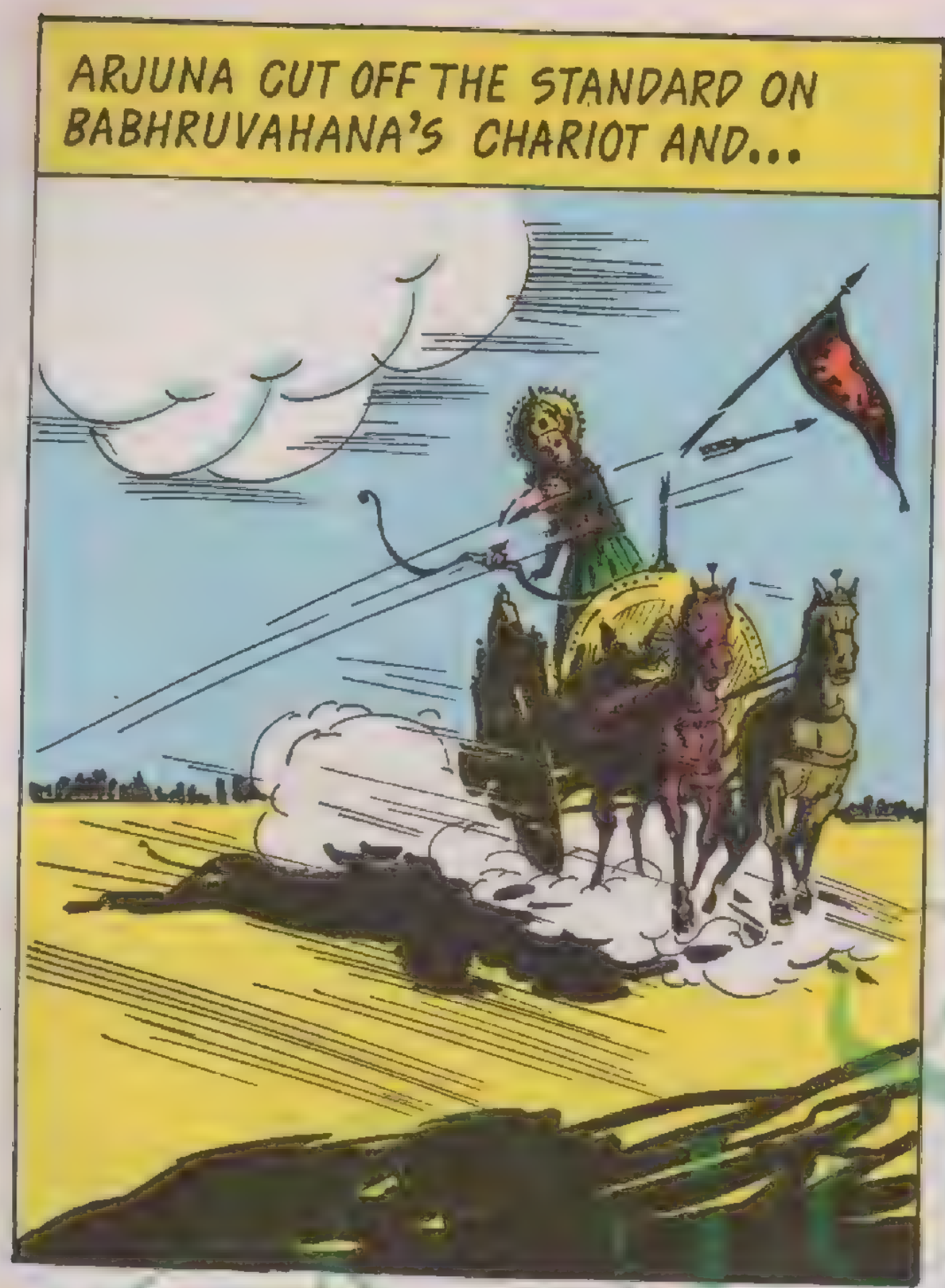
AN ARROW SENT BY BABHRUVAHANA PIERCED ARJUNA THROUGH THE SHOULDER.


WEAK WITH PAIN, ARJUNA RESTED AWHILE LEANING AGAINST HIS BOW, LOOKING ALMOST DEAD.

THEN AS HIS STRENGTH CAME BACK TO HIM
EXCELLENT! O SON OF CHITRANGADA! I AM PLEASED BY YOUR SKILL.

NOW FACE MY ARROWS AND FIGHT WITHOUT RUNNING AWAY.

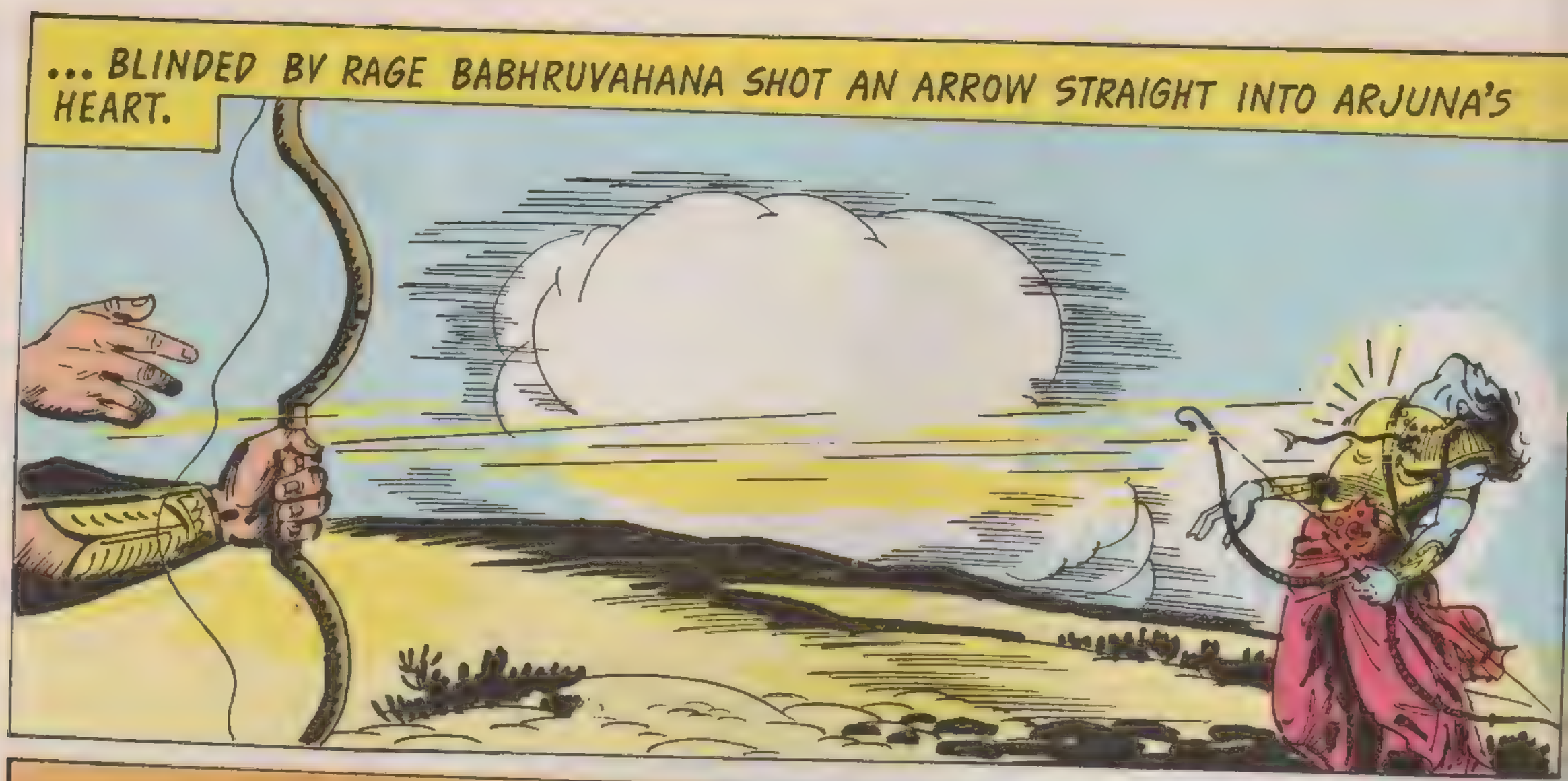

BUT BABHRUVAHANA CUT ARJUNA'S ARROWS INTO BITS.


ARJUNA CUT OFF THE STANDARD ON BABHRUVAHANA'S CHARIOT AND...

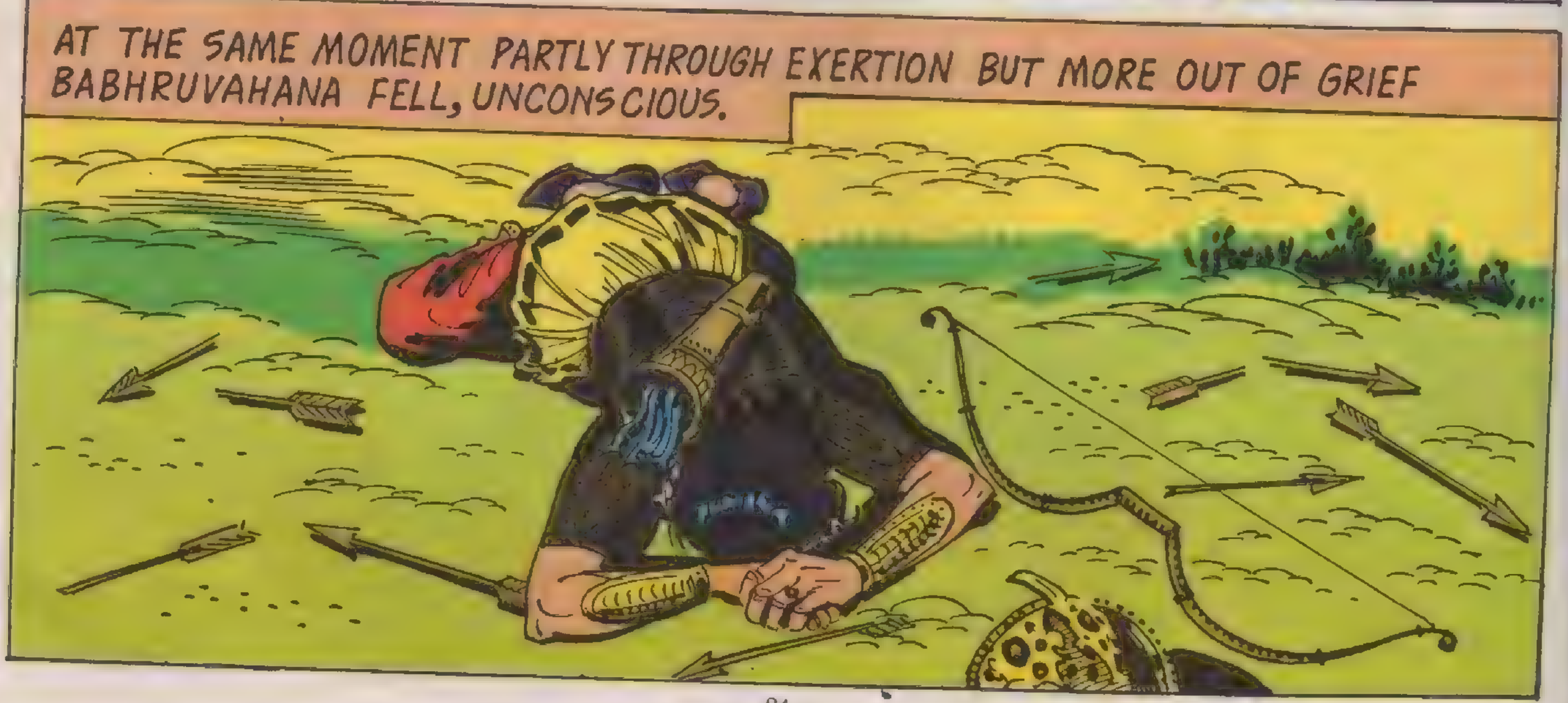
...KILLED THE HORSES.

INFURIATED, BABHRUVAHANA GOT DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT AND FOUGHT HIS FATHER ON FOOT.

ARJUNA ATTACKED HIM RELENTLESSLY TILL...


... BLINDED BY RAGE BABHRUVAHANA SHOT AN ARROW STRAIGHT INTO ARJUNA'S HEART.

ARJUNA DROPPED DEAD ON THE FIELD.


AT THE SAME MOMENT PARTLY THROUGH EXERTION BUT MORE OUT OF GRIEF BABHRUVAHANA FELL, UNCONSCIOUS.

AND ALL THE TIME ULOOPI STOOD WATCHING THE SCENE, UNPERTURBED, A PICTURE OF SERENITY.

A MESSENGER RAN TO CHITRANGADA.

I HAVE SAD NEWS FOR YOU. YOUR HUSBAND HAS BEEN KILLED BY THE KING WHO HIMSELF NOW LIES IN A SWOON.

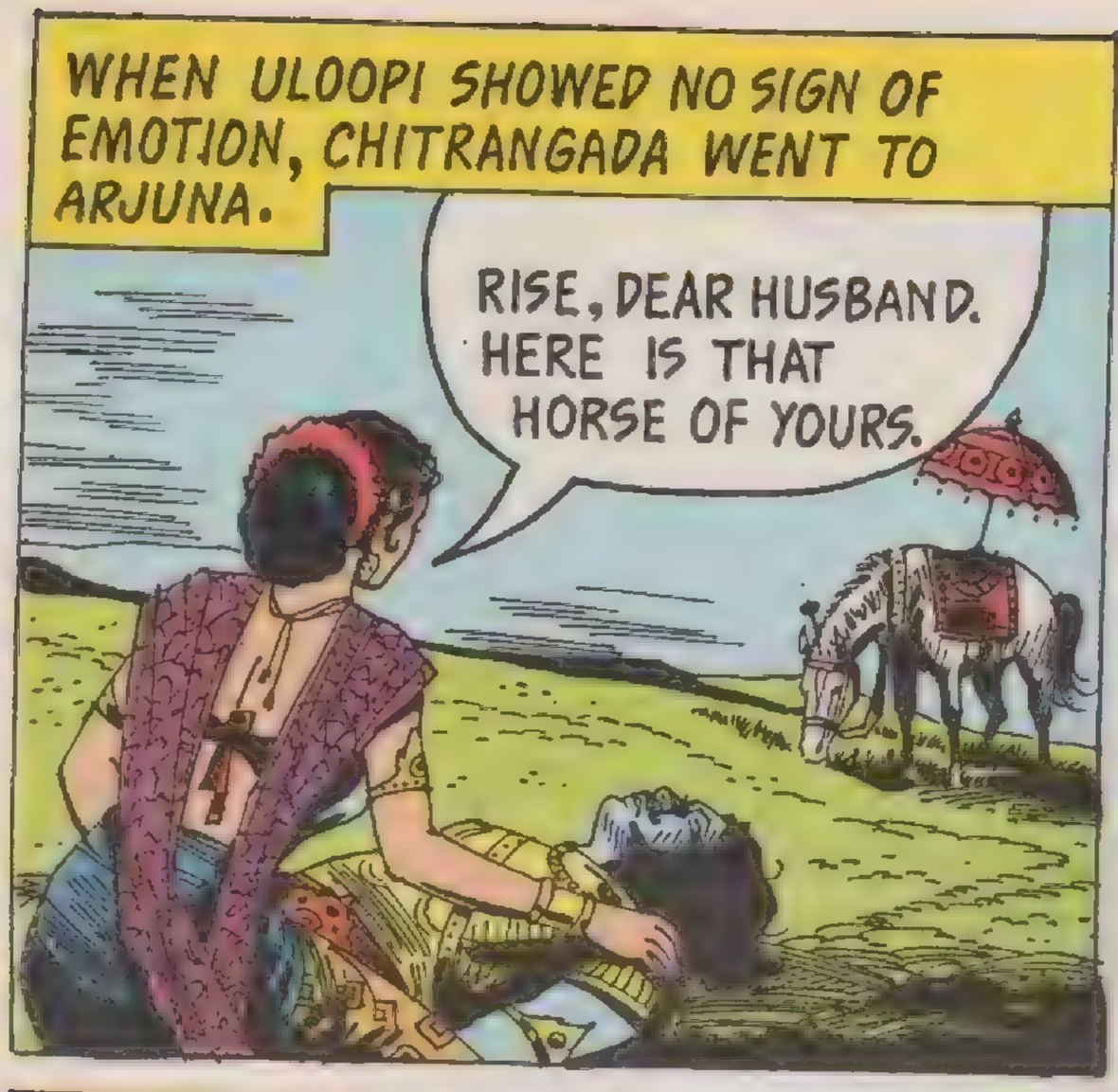
CHITRANGADA TURNED PALE.

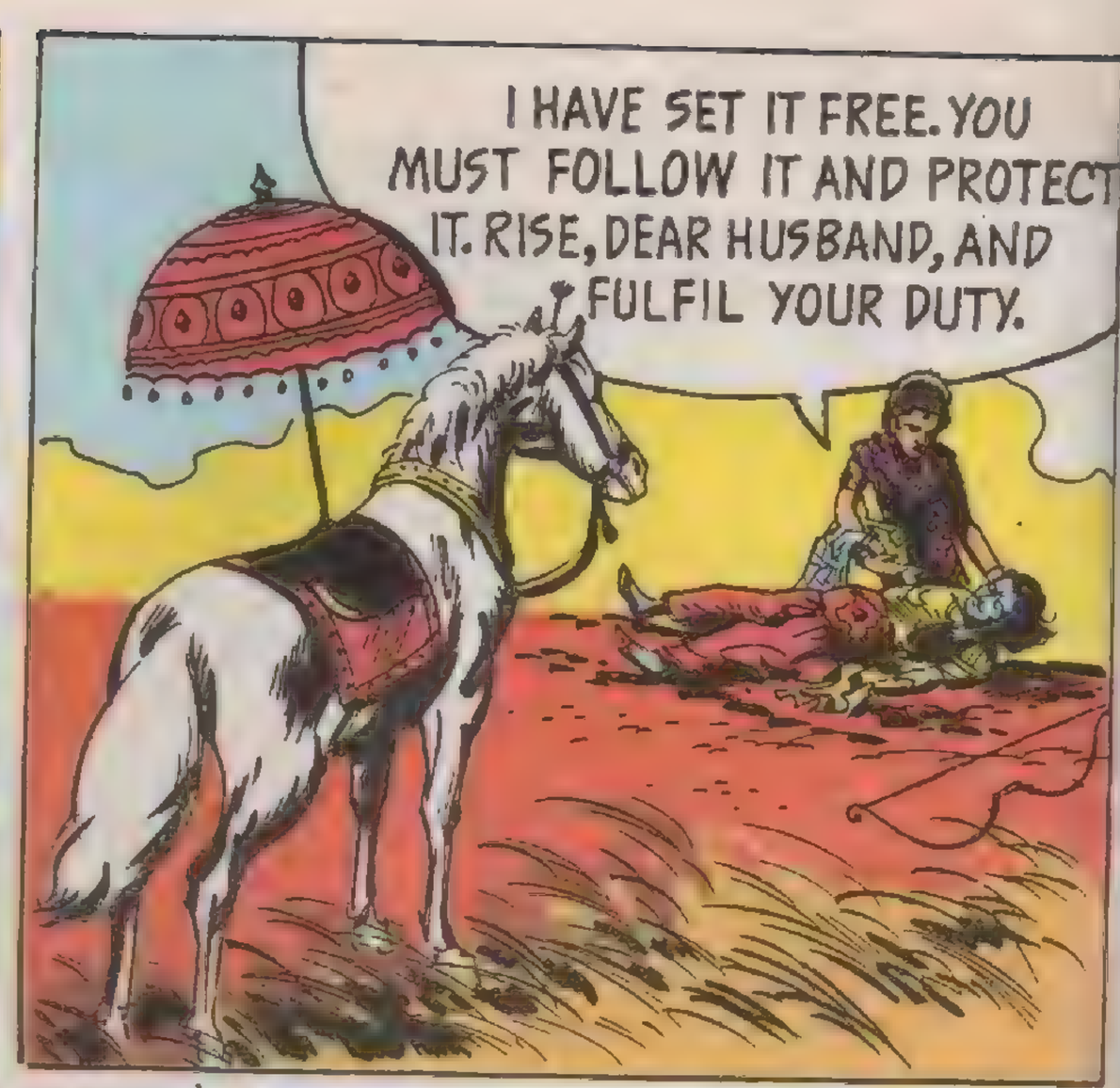
TAKE ME TO THE BATTLEFIELD.

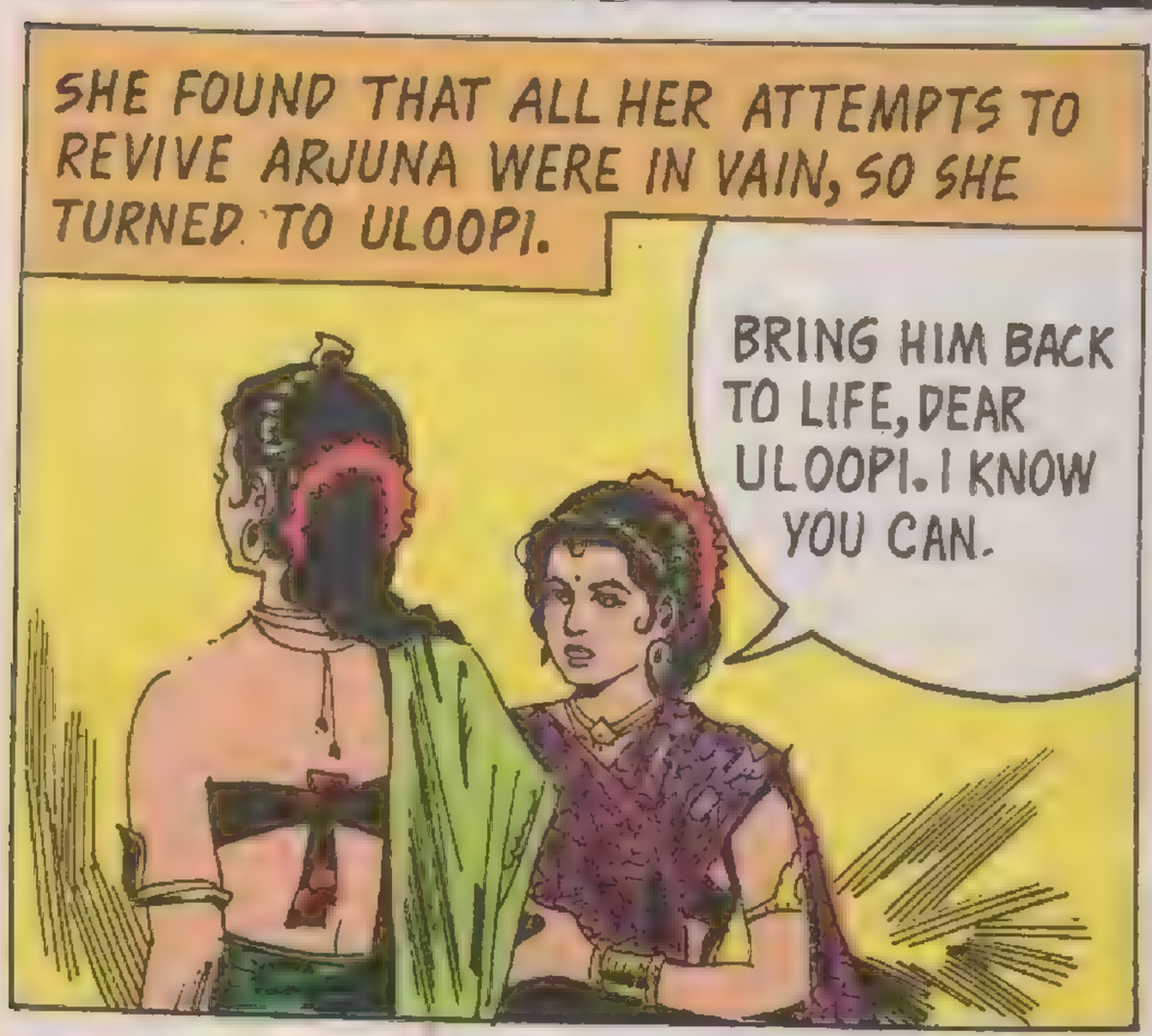
AT THE BATTLEFIELD—

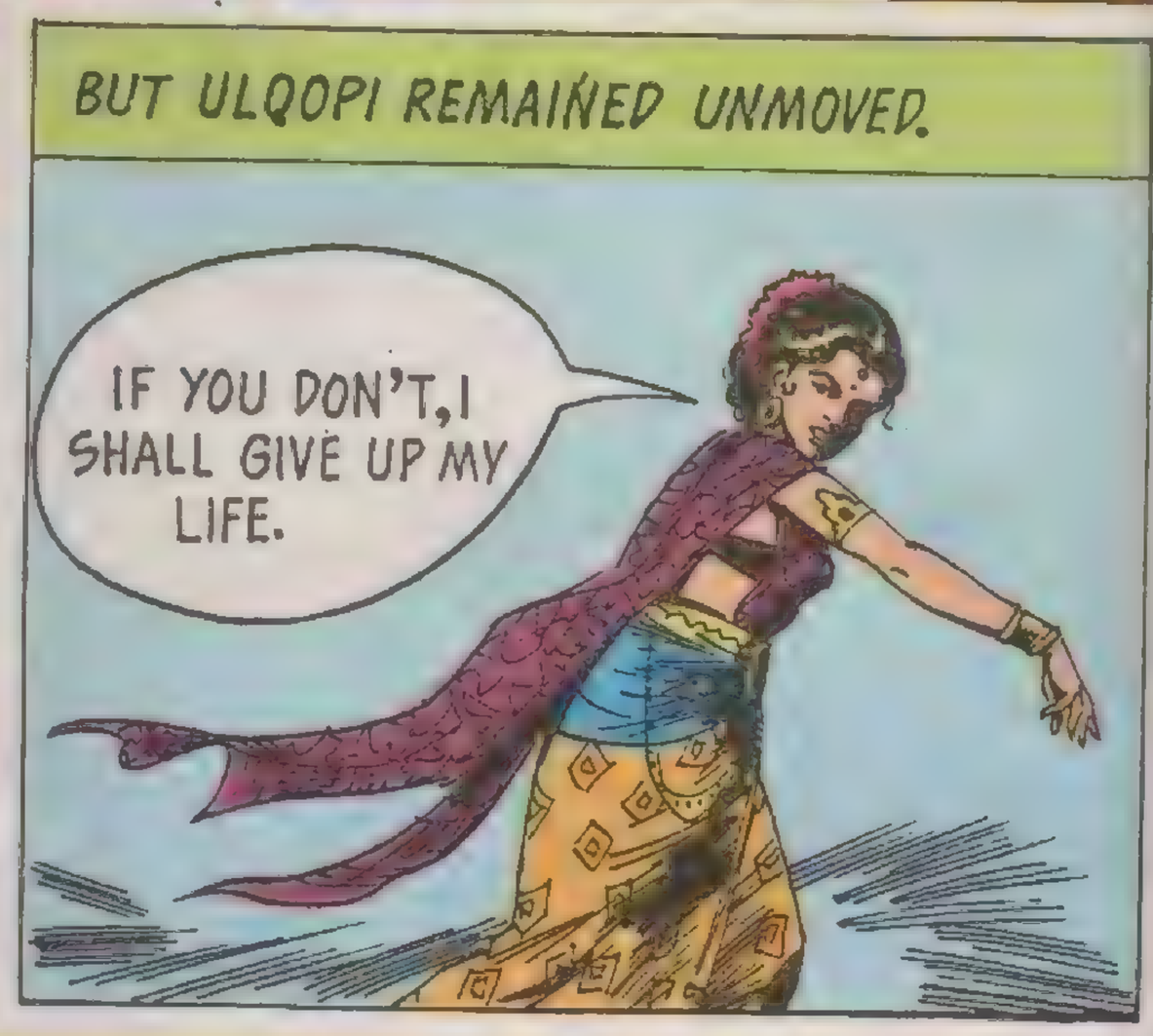
WHEN SHE CAME TO HER SENSES, SHE SAW ULOOPI.

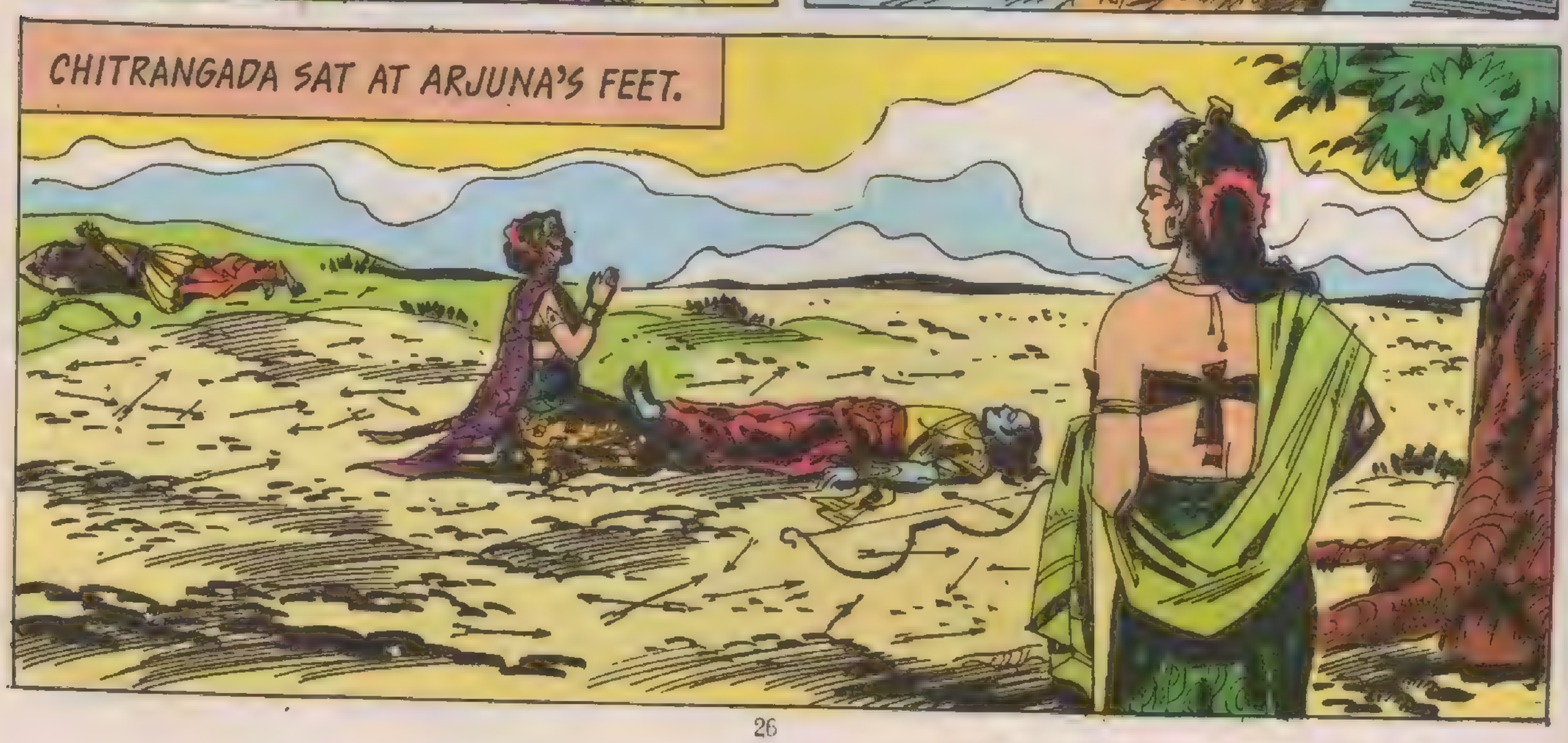
O ULOOPI! I KNOW HOW DEVOTED YOU ARE TO OUR HUSBAND. YET I DO NOT FIND YOU GRIEVING.


WHEN ULOOPI SHOWED NO SIGN OF EMOTION, CHITRANGADA WENT TO ARJUNA.
RISE, DEAR HUSBAND. HERE IS THAT HORSE OF YOURS.


I HAVE SET IT FREE. YOU MUST FOLLOW IT AND PROTECT IT. RISE, DEAR HUSBAND, AND FULFIL YOUR DUTY.


SHE FOUND THAT ALL HER ATTEMPTS TO REVIVE ARJUNA WERE IN VAIN, SO SHE TURNED TO ULOOPI.
BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE, DEAR ULOOPI. I KNOW YOU CAN.


BUT ULOOPI REMAINED UNMOVED.
IF YOU DON'T, I SHALL GIVE UP MY LIFE.


CHITRANGADA SAT AT ARJUNA'S FEET.

JUST THEN BABHRUVAHANA REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS.

ALAS! WHAT A PAINFUL SIGHT! MY MOTHER WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT UP IN LUXURY, SITTING ON THE NAKED EARTH BESIDE MY DEAD FATHER. AND I KILLED HIM!

THEN HIS GAZE FELL ON ULOOPI.

O MOTHER! YOUR HEART SEEMS TO BE VERY HARD. IT DOES NOT BREAK EVEN ON SEEING YOUR HUSBAND LYING DEAD BEFORE YOU!

ULOOPI HEARD THESE ACCUSATIONS IN SILENCE.

WHY SHOULD IT? BY KILLING ARJUNA IN BATTLE I HAVE DONE WHAT YOU WANTED OF ME.

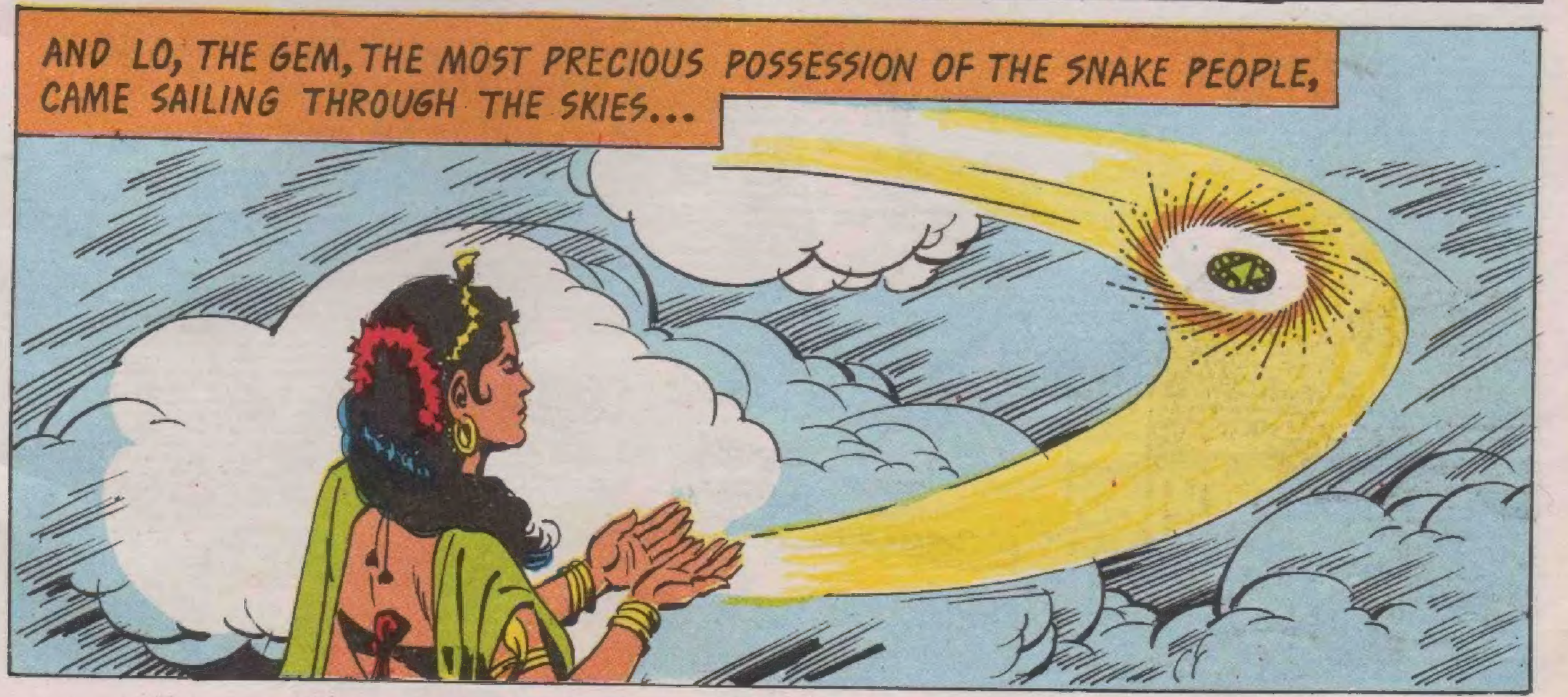
BUT FOR ME THERE IS NO REDEMPTION. I SHALL HAVE TO SINK INTO HELL. SO DREADFULLY HAVE I SINNED IN KILLING MY OWN FATHER.

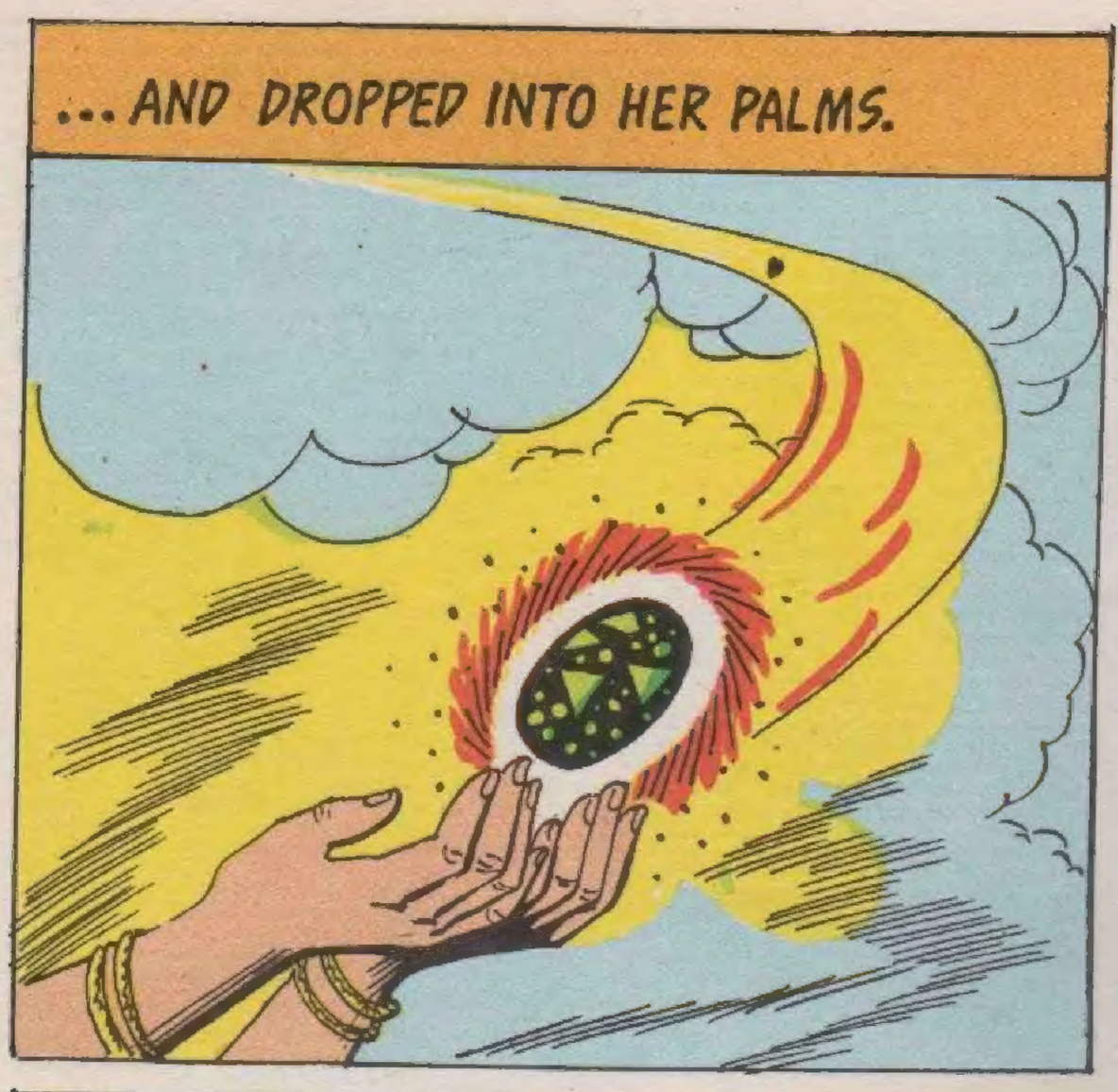
BABHRUVAHANA WAS STRICKEN WITH GRIEF.

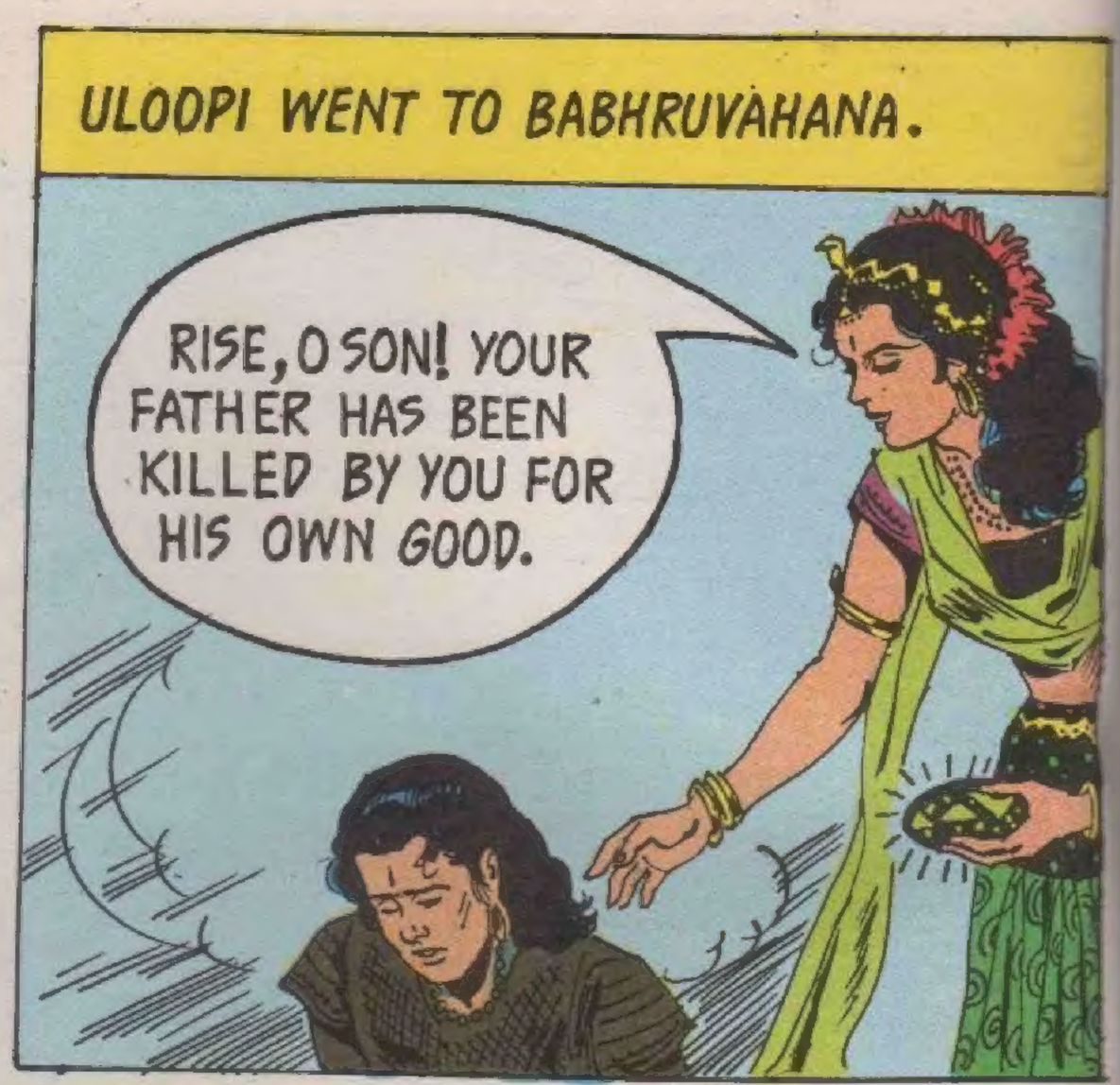
LISTEN MOTHER, IF MY FATHER DOES NOT COME BACK TO LIFE, I SHALL FOLLOW HIM.

ULOOPI WATCHED THE THREE OF THEM.
IT IS TIME I ACTED.

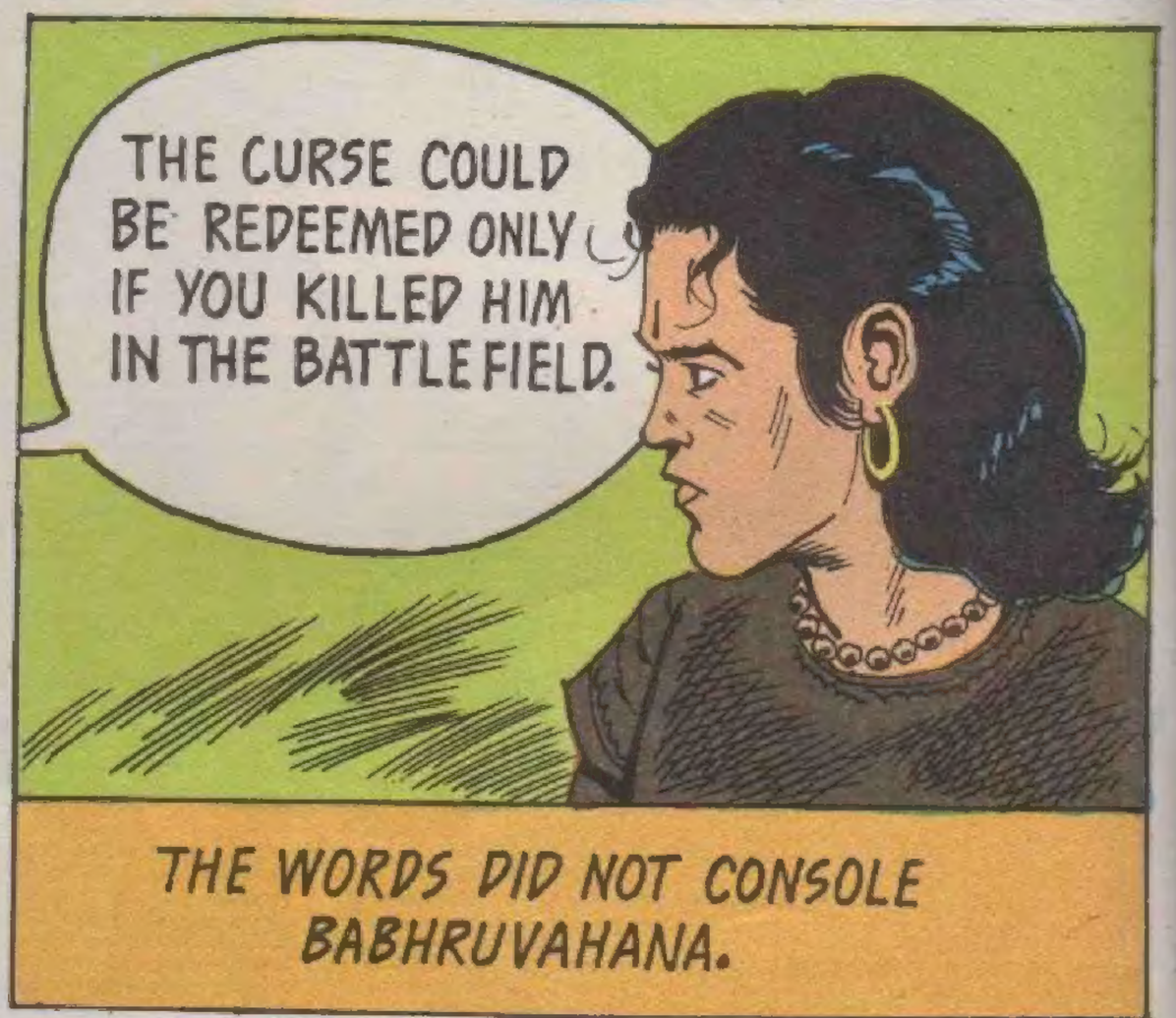
SHE CLOSED HER EYES AND THOUGHT OF THE GEM OF THE SNAKE PEOPLE, WHICH COULD REVIVE THE DEAD.

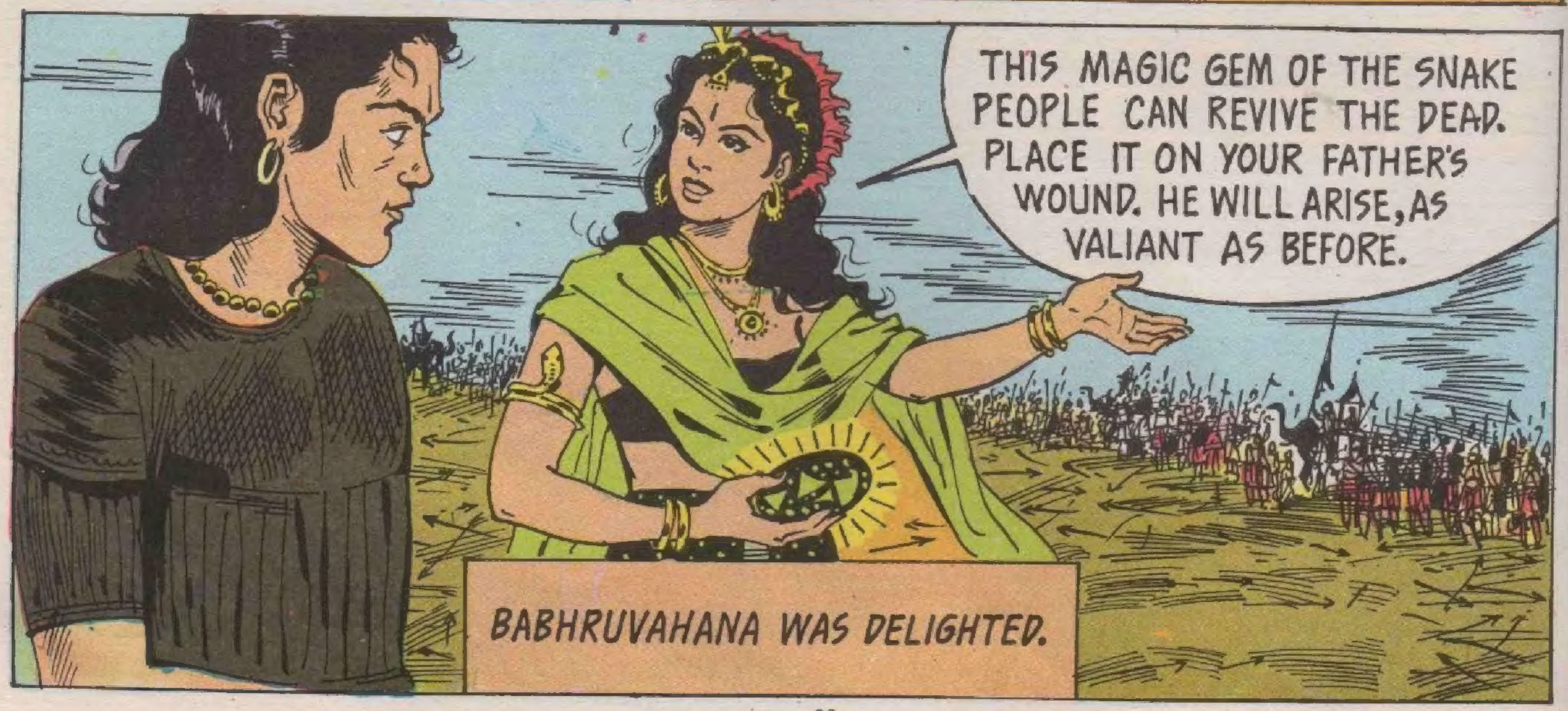

AND LO, THE GEM, THE MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION OF THE SNAKE PEOPLE, CAME SAILING THROUGH THE SKIES...


...AND DROPPED INTO HER PALMS.


ULOOPI WENT TO BABHRUVAHANA.
RISE, O SON! YOUR FATHER HAS BEEN KILLED BY YOU FOR HIS OWN GOOD.

HE HAD BEEN CURSED BY THE VASUS TO GO TO HELL.

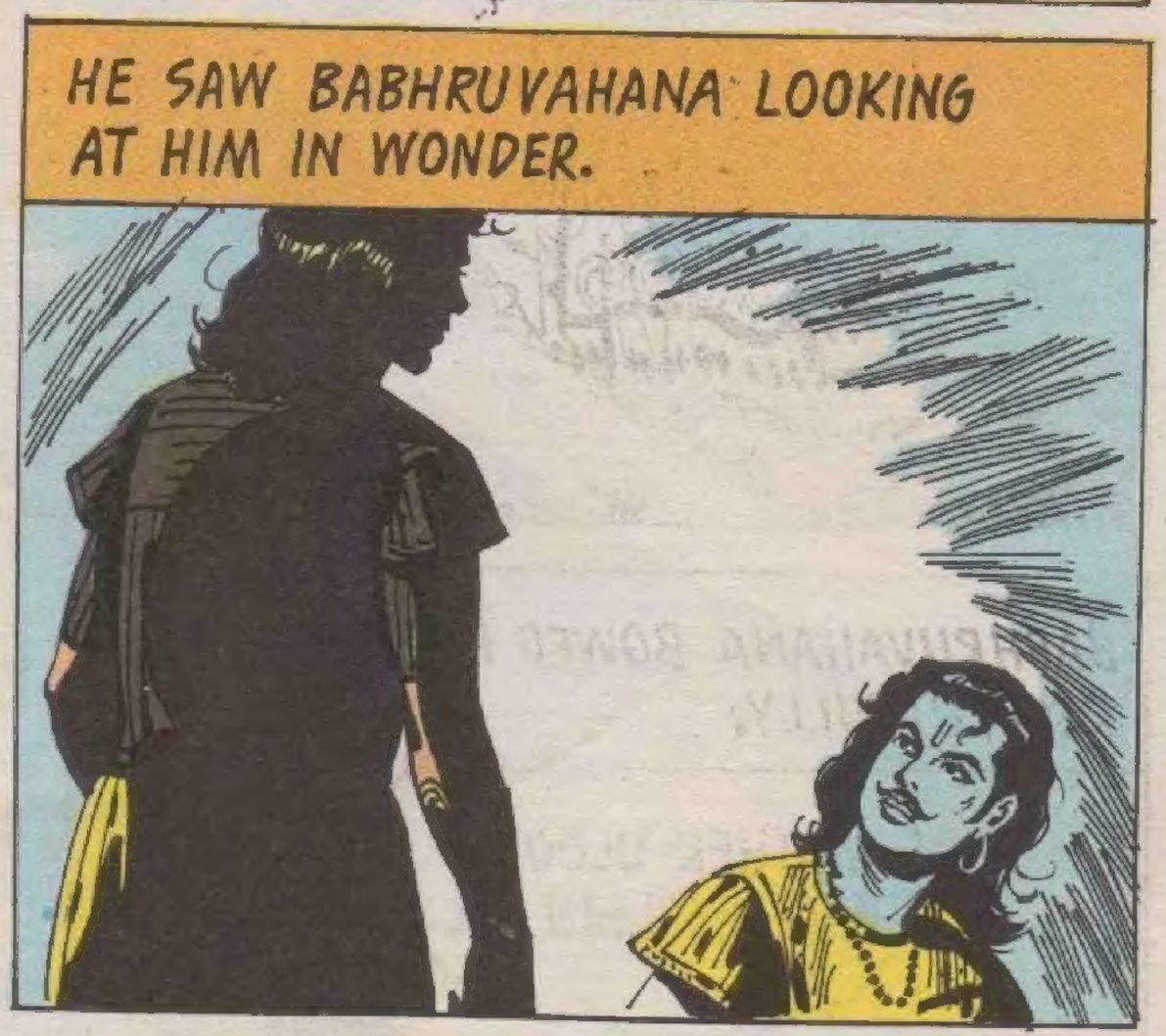

THE CURSE COULD BE REDEEMED ONLY IF YOU KILLED HIM IN THE BATTLE FIELD.
THE WORDS DID NOT CONSOLE BABHRUVAHANA.

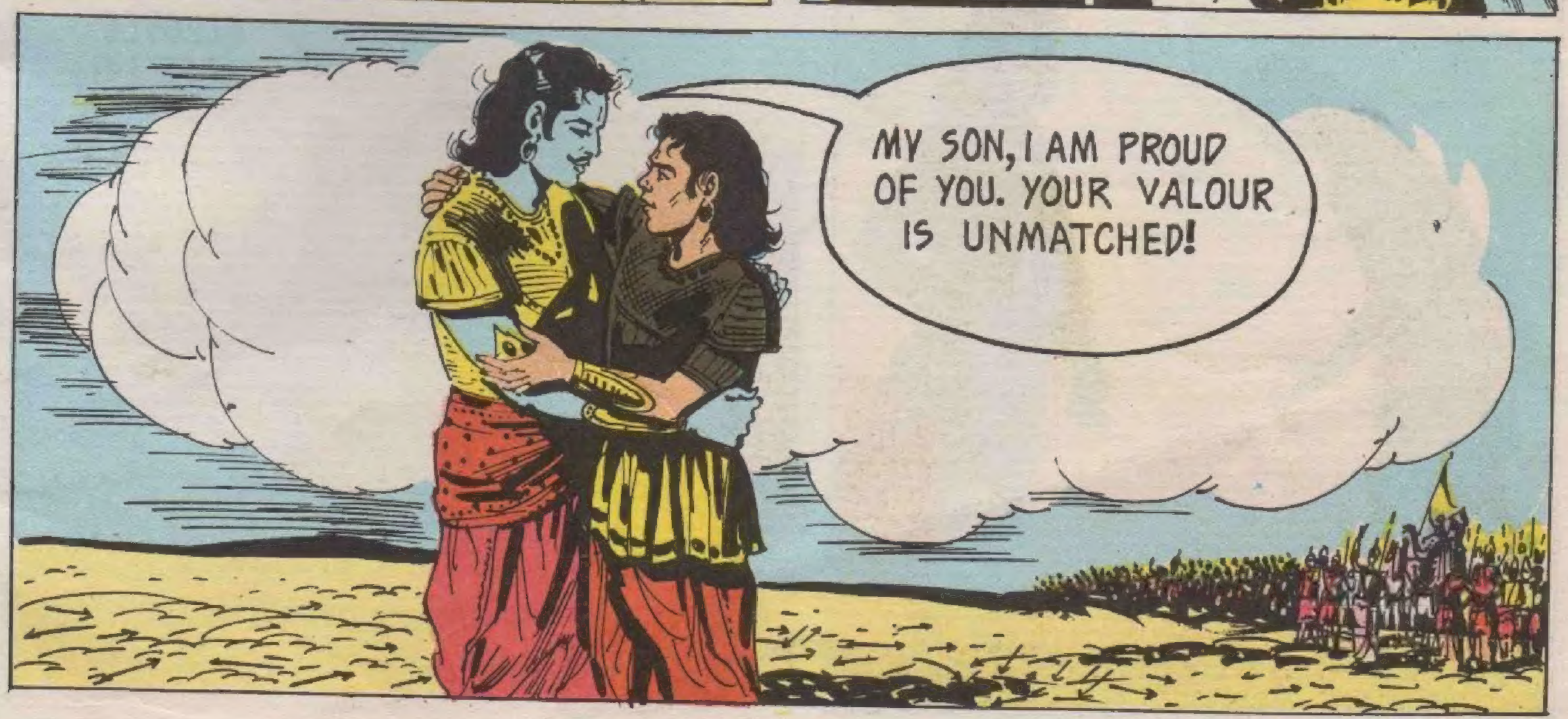

THIS MAGIC GEM OF THE SNAKE PEOPLE CAN REVIVE THE DEAD. PLACE IT ON YOUR FATHER'S WOUND. HE WILL ARISE, AS VALIANT AS BEFORE.
BABHRUVAHANA WAS DELIGHTED.

DEAR MOTHER, HOW COULD I HAVE EVER DOUBTED YOU? PLEASE FORGIVE ME. I AM EVER GRATEFUL TO YOU.

HE WENT UP TO ARJUNA AND PLACED THE GEM ON HIS CHEST WHERE THE ARROW HAD PIERCED HIM.

ARJUNA WOKE UP RUBBING HIS EYES LIKE ONE WHO HAD BEEN FAST ASLEEP FOR A LONG TIME.


HE SAW BABHRUVAHANA LOOKING AT HIM IN WONDER.


MY SON, I AM PROUD OF YOU. YOUR VALOUR IS UNMATCHED!

ONLY THEN DID ARJUNA NOTICE CHITRANGADA AND ULOOPI. HE TURNED TO BABHRUVAHANA.

WHAT ARE YOUR MOTHERS DOING ON THE BATTLEFIELD?

BABHRUVAHANA BOWED HIS HEAD RESPECTFULLY.

MOTHER ULOOPI WILL EXPLAIN ALL.

ULOOPI TOLD ARJUNA ALL ABOUT THE CURSE OF THE VASUS.

BELOVED WIFE, I AM INDEBTED TO YOU. BOTH FOR THIS LIFE AND MY LIFE HERE-AFTER.

AND ULOOPI'S DREAM OF WINNING ARJUNA'S LOVE WAS FULFILLED.